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General Assembly

Sixtieth session

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19th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 21 September 2005, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Eliasson ..... (Sweden)

The meeting was called to order at 3.08 p.m.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency The Honourable Sato Kilman, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Vanuatu.

Mr. Kilman (Vanuatu): I bring warm greetings from the people of the Republic of Vanuatu.

At the outset, I wish to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixtieth session. I assure you of my Government's support for the work of the United Nations under your stewardship. I take this opportunity also to acknowledge, with deep admiration, the sterling dedication of your predecessor, Mr. Jean Ping, who meticulously steered the work of the fifty-ninth session to its conclusion. I would like also to pay tribute to the Secretary-General for his active role and for his resilience in continuing the work of United Nations reform.

We come to the Assembly annually to reaffirm our faith and confidence in the purposes and principles of the Charter. This year is especially important, since leaders are meeting five years after the Millennium Summit to take stock of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Although the outcome document has been adopted, we are extremely disappointed with the omission of numerous paragraphs. The farcical ending of the negotiations resulted in a dilution of the quality of the final document. The United Nations must, in future, avoid becoming a rubber stamp for the powerful.

The world is at a crossroads. Our meeting is taking place at a critical juncture. Civil and political strife, wars, poverty, diseases, famine, drought, natural disasters, terrorism, minority oppression and environmental degradation are affecting the lives of millions of people. The sacrilege of such human suffering is unbelievable and painful to bear.

The United Nations must be able to do more and must respond more promptly to such situations. It must do so by improving its preventive-capacity mechanisms so as to minimize the devastating impact on peoples' livelihood and to ease their suffering.

We must ask, therefore, whether we are really doing enough for our peoples. Is this all about impressive speeches, rhetoric and pretentious, grandiose plans that detract from the real issues that need addressing? My Government is disillusioned by the lack of genuine goodwill and support that is being offered to the United Nations.

I would like to reiterate my Government's message to the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session.

> "The Achilles heel of the current structure is the imbalance of power in the United Nations system. It has become so chronic that it has weakened

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> the multilateral focus, cohesiveness and internationalism of the United Nations." (*A/59/PV.14, p. 25*)

The principles of democratization and good governance, so actively advocated and championed by some Members, must be reflected in the reorganization and decision-making process of the United Nations system.

If we are to get back on track, the United Nations must be rejuvenated. It must be reinvigorated so that it can reassume its legitimate and central responsibility in addressing the causes of conflict, maintaining peace and security and promoting the development agenda. But if it is to do that, the Organization's decision-making and other processes must be transparent and truly democratized. Some of us preach strongly on democracy the world over, yet are unable to practice and enforce those values when it really matters. We are now on the threshold of a new beginning, so let us not allow this new opportunity to pass.

At the summit, I said that tolerance and respect must form the nucleus for any reform of the United Nations. Only by enforcing those values will we come to realize the true meaning of justice, equality and human rights. The diversity of the developing world presents huge challenges for us all. However, the strong nations must be able to muster the political will to effect changes. The big players need to transform their philosophy and their mindset, because they have been hindrances to the creation of an equitable system of good governance within multilateral organizations such as the United Nations.

The United Nations remains indispensable for future peace and prosperity. Globalization has brought nations together; we are interlinked and interdependent, and that requires global cooperation and governance from all responsible Members of the Organization. Understandably, there are vested interests held by the powerful. That requires genuine cooperation and goodwill, and those interests and the role of the United Nations must converge in order to ensure compatibility with the international legal framework.

My Government fully supports efforts to reform the United Nations system so as to ensure a stronger and more effective Organization. In this context, my delegation shares the views of other delegations on the need to revise the membership of the Security Council so as to ensure fair representation of Member States without affecting the authority of the Council. A more representative Council will bring openness and transparency, create confidence and improve understanding and cooperation. The restructuring of the Security Council membership is long overdue. Diversity is essential in that respect.

I agree that terrorism is one of three main scourges confronting humankind today — the others being poverty and disease. My Government condemns those deliberate callous and inhuman acts that have taken the lives of innocent people. There is no just act of terrorism. We agree that we must work collectively in eliminating that deadly menace from the face of the Earth. But the fight against terrorism must be balanced and targeted so as to ensure that resources are equitably channelled into meeting the Millennium Development Goals.

The global economic situation today discriminates against many of the developing economies. Unfair trading practices and the imposition of intrusive policies on national economies affect our economies by opening them up to unfavourable conditions that only favour the stronger nations. Such negative actions marginalize nations and peoples. Marginalization then breeds and incites resentment, fuelling the hatred that eventually creates fertile grounds for extremism to grow and flourish.

We have agreed on the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission, which will also enable more work to be done to combat the spread of terrorism, in particular by identifying areas where international support and understanding are required. Although we are injecting many resources into curing the problem, we are not really preventing it from emerging. The world needs a spirit of pacifism if real peace is to prevail. In order to achieve that, the United Nations needs moral leadership — leadership that focuses on security and dignity for the human person.

The post-Monterrey Conference era poses extreme challenges for the economic survival and socio-economic stability of many of the small island developing nations like Vanuatu. We urge our development partners to honour their commitments to reach the 0.7 per cent target for official development assistance (ODA). In this context we welcome the commitments from the United States of America through the Millennium Challenge Account. We also

welcome commitments by Qatar, the European Union and the People's Republic of China. Furthermore, we look forward to the coming to fruition of initiatives by France and other countries.

The pivotal role of trade as the engine for economic growth cannot be overemphasized, but, as many of my colleagues from the small island States and the least developed countries have stated, market access and special preferential treatment must be provided.

Furthermore, many of us are restricted by inflexible and immoral conditions that inhibit new financing and development initiatives. We continue to call for trade and investment and labour export to help our economies to grow.

My Government's national development priorities focus on building the productive sector. The Government's prioritized action agenda highlights the policy areas that we believe to be essential in meeting our development objectives. It is the catalyst for Vanuatu's medium- to long-term strategic planning, which emphasizes the need to empower our rural population through infrastructure- and capacity-building initiatives. The development policy framework is consistent with achieving the MDG targets, and the development strategy is being refined to give equal consideration to our other international commitments and the Pacific Plan. We appeal to our development partners to assist us in the effective implementation of our strategy.

Mr. Martirosyan (Armenia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

A fundamental lesson to be drawn from Vanuatu's reforms is that they have been forced from outside, without being adapted to our national circumstances. From Vanuatu's perspective, externally driven reforms must be buttressed by an equal partnership that respects local traditions and cultures and the rights of all citizens, without disturbing the essential uniting mechanisms of society that have successfully held us together. Vanuatu embraces democracy and the concepts of good governance and transparency, but those far-reaching principles must be tailored to traditional systems without affecting their relevance and significance.

With regard to the environment, we urge our development partners to actively support the effective implementation of the Mauritius Strategy. The challenges confronting island States are ominous, and I repeat the call that more recognition should be given to accommodate our natural characteristics and vulnerabilities. We also urge States that have not yet done so to act responsibly by ratifying the Kyoto Protocol as soon as possible.

On the question of the shipment of radioactive materials and hazardous waste, improvements in safeguards and assurances should not have to await a calamity. Preventive measures must be the course of action to take. The risks posed by the forces of nature, coupled with increased terrorist activities, are too grave for enhanced safeguards to deal with. The world would be better off banning such shipments rather than endlessly trying to perfect safeguards approaches that, at best, only limit such serious risks. Complacency would be our greatest mistake.

The Charter of the United Nations espouses the principles that continue to guide the Organization's efforts in the process of self-determination. That right must be progressively advanced. The United Nations must be consistent and not lose sight of the fundamental right of self-determination for those who are working their way out of the shackles of colonial rule. Ruling and sovereign authorities must ensure that the process remains on track.

Where the United Nations has failed to fully comply with the appropriate legal procedures, it is only proper that such instances be adequately addressed to allow justice to prevail for the victims. Circumventing the issue only exposes the dark history and raises serious questions about the credibility, relevance and integrity of the United Nations. Only in an open and consistent manner can we redress past failures and provide a stronger basis for the advancement of United Nations ideals.

Such contradictions simply make a mockery of the fundamental principles of human rights and self-determination clearly enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. How can we call for respect for human rights, yet blatantly ignore the pleas of the millions calling out for justice? The United Nations cannot, and must not, continue to turn a blind eye to its own past failures. It is morally, politically and legally wrong to do so.

The continuing disputes raised over the implementation of United Nations resolutions are clear

examples challenging the integrity and validity of the United Nations. We cannot ignore the calls of the West Papuans in their quest for justice. We urge the United Nations to act responsibly in revisiting the case of West Papua. However, we are encouraged by the Indonesian Government's efforts to address alleged human rights abuses. We also welcome decisions empowering West Papuans to manage their own affairs in collaboration with the central Government.

The United Nations must also explore various avenues to end the economic embargo imposed on Cuba. Countless resolutions have been adopted to no effect, and the Cuban people continue to be marginalized in the multilateral trading system. This is a critically challenging responsibility. Some may see it as an improbable task, but it must be addressed with genuine support and goodwill on the part of the relevant authorities and sovereign States.

In conclusion, I hope that the Creator's wisdom will prevail as we continue our journey. Despite all our differences and diversities, human security for all is our main goal and should remain the focus of the United Nations agenda. The cardinal question is, will Members allow the United Nations to undertake serious reforms in meeting the challenges ahead? And will the Organization be capable of guaranteeing a future of peace and prosperity that is not reserved only for the big players but will be enjoyed by all? Will the United Nations become a juggernaut for the stronger nations? A famous biblical verse reminds us about the fundamental wisdom of building on rock instead of sand. The future remains in our hands, and the Republic of Vanuatu will play its part.

May our beloved almighty Creator bless us all.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Carlos Morales Troncoso, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Dominican Republic.

Mr. Morales Troncoso (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): Permit me to join others in expressing, on behalf of our President, Mr. Leonel Fernández Reyna, our heartfelt congratulations to Ambassador Jan Eliasson of Sweden on his election as President of the General Assembly at this historic sixtieth session. The Dominican Republic is confident that he will lead it in an effective and fruitful manner. I also express my gratitude to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his most valuable contributions to the strengthening of the United Nations as an institution. In addition, I wish to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Jean Ping of Gabon and to acknowledge his notable work in leading the most recent session.

This sixtieth session of the General Assembly should go down in history as one of the most momentous United Nations sessions. Proof of that lies in two areas of major significance on its agenda: first, accountability with regard to the degree of achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and renewal of the commitments made to achieve them; and secondly, setting out the course for reform of the Organization to adapt it so that it can address current challenging problems and guarantee the effectiveness of its actions in order to ensure the development, freedom and peace of all the world's peoples.

For nations such as the one I represent, the ambitious agenda aimed at achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015 has become the key governmental programme.

What could be more important to small underdeveloped nations with scarce natural resources than leading their people out of the socio-economic abyss caused by poverty, poor health and the lack of education and productive employment? No political action is more urgent — at least not in the Dominican Republic. Eliminating poverty in the world is a monumental task requiring unstinting political commitment and the collective participation of all societies, as well as unlimited economic support from the developed nations.

The heartbreaking realities of the present are morally unacceptable in a world with humankind at its centre; they underline the flawed nature of the zero-sum policies practised in the past, when the great Powers dedicated themselves to amassing wealth by exploiting the riches of poorer, weaker nations.

Widespread poverty is not good for poor nations, and even less so for rich nations. As all know, poverty leads to despair, violence and chaos. That, in turn, produces unbearable social and political tensions and the outbreak of conflicts, leading to failed States. When a State fails, the conflict raging within spills over into regional conflicts or prompts endless, unstoppable waves of migrants. In today's world, a failed State eventually becomes an issue before the United Nations, requiring attention and solutions.

When one has examined how that chain of events works, it becomes clear that achieving the Millennium Development Goals is crucial.

Allow me to underline the following. It is alarming that in 2015, the year in which the Millennium Development Goals are to be achieved, the production of oil — the fuel that enabled the world to achieve spectacular growth over the past 100 years — is projected to begin to decline dangerously. To foresee the future, one has only to take a good look at the present. All the world's Governments face difficulties caused by high oil prices, and we are all aware that this time, unlike the oil shock of the 1970s, the present reduction in the flow of oil could become permanent. I emphasize this because, owing to that situation, our nations risk facing endless difficulties on all fronts.

It is disturbing that this should happen precisely when we are making enormous efforts to overcome the obstacles preventing us from creating a dignified, free and safe society for our peoples. The predicted global crisis could bring an ongoing reduction in oil production, immediately causing higher oil prices. The catastrophic effects that would produce cannot be ignored today. We have known for a long time that oil would not last forever. Now is the time for the United Nations to launch an initiative, much broader in scope than the Millennium Development Goals, to chart a course guiding Member States to a civilization not dependent on oil.

My country, the Dominican Republic, shares the small Caribbean island of Hispaniola with Haiti. It has to be said that, historically, the problems on one side of the border have tended to become problems for the other side. Haiti, a country with a 200-year history of independence, is a fractured nation today. Amid insurmountable economic difficulties and all types of social shortfalls, its political conflicts weakened its institutions, and the State collapsed.

Today's transitional regime, without enough resources to function properly, is, with the support of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, striving greatly to rebuild what was destroyed, and the international community has put great hope in restoring legitimate political authority through the holding of elections.

In the General Assembly and elsewhere, many have said that they believe that the electoral process in Haiti should not have been given top priority; rather, top priority should have gone to humanitarian assistance and job creation by means of a massive programme for building infrastructure such as roads, water supply systems, schools, hospitals and electric generators. However, past experience in the process of rebuilding failed States points to the priority need to legitimize new political leadership through elections, even though we know that in such cases, the ideal framework for holding elections cannot be achieved.

That is why, on behalf of my country's President, Mr. Leonel Fernández Reyna, I propose that the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, with the support of the Transitional Government of Haiti and the international community, should carry out — as they have been doing — a broad national dialogue to reach general agreement between the political forces and the organized sectors of Haitian civil society.

Such an agreement would ensure national reconciliation and prepare the way for a national reconstruction plan that has the support of all Haitian leadership. All Haitian civil society and political leadership have important roles to play in their country's institutional reconstruction, and all must fulfil those responsibilities. We cannot ignore the fact that in recent years, the Haitian people have been living in fear, insecurity, poverty and despair. For recovery to take place, the people need to have confidence in the process of peace, reconciliation and the rebuilding of State institutions.

In addition, President Fernandez proposes that the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) invite distinguished world leaders to be present during the elections in Haiti, in order to give more credibility to the electoral process.

Among these statesmen, the Dominican Republic takes the liberty of suggesting Presidents Fox of Mexico and Lula da Silva of Brazil, the former Presidents of the United States of America, Mr. Carter and Mr. Clinton, and the legendary former President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela.

Elections are the first important political step to help Haiti back on its feet. We are not under the illusion that elections alone will guarantee security, ensure the reign of democracy in the immediate future or produce an overnight improvement in the living conditions of Haitians.

Our own experience has taught us that the road to democracy will be a long one, as it has been for the nations that today function within the framework of democratic institutions. And the road towards development will be even longer but more secure, if tensions are reduced, a climate of cooperation is fostered and if donor nations and institutions faithfully fulfil their generous promises of financial support for Haiti in a timely manner.

On the subject of peace, security and dialogue, we want to comment on two items that are very high on the international political agenda. First, the progress made in the peace process between Israel and the Palestinian National Authority.

Secondly, the recent natural disasters in Asia and now in the United States of America are forcing us to think about the vulnerability of nations to the potentially dangerous, manmade changes in the balance of nature when faced with these types of events. We sincerely regret the loss of life due to Hurricane Katrina.

In conclusion, I would like to say that we must not lose time. Let us act today, as if this were our last opportunity to reach a consensus and formulate action to turn sustainable development into a collective achievement in order to ensure world security and progress together on the road to peace.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Youssouf Ouedraogo, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Burkina Faso.

Mr. Ouedraogo (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): Burkina Faso is delighted to see this important session of the General Assembly being presided over by an illustrious son of a great country, Sweden, with which we have maintained exemplary and fruitful relations of friendship and cooperation for several decades.

I hasten to assure the President of the full cooperation of my delegation. It is also my pleasure to pay a tribute to his predecessor, Mr. Jean Ping, whose talents as a seasoned and effective diplomat we have been able to appreciate throughout the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly.

I would like to associate in this tribute the Secretary-General, a man of great vision, who has been the architect of this new United Nations that we have so earnestly sought and who has had the courage to lay its foundations.

The current session will receive specific notice in the annals of the United Nations. Apart from its coinciding with both the midterm review of the Millennium Development Goals and the reform of the Organization, this session is also being held at a watershed in world history and international relations.

In Africa, despite the constant efforts of States and regional groupings, the persistence of numerous conflicts and hot spots continues to be a subject of major concern. I am thinking particularly of the situation in the Great Lakes Region, Darfur, Somalia and Côte d'Ivoire. In the Middle East, the struggle for survival is the daily battle of the Palestinian people. It is our conviction that only the strict implementation of the Road Map will make peace possible in that sorely tried region.

The numerous terrorist acts throughout the world claim our attention and remind us of how vulnerable we are in the face of terrorism. We must, henceforth, realize that no strategy, no matter how energetic it might be, will be able to wipe out this scourge, unless it attacks the underlying causes, which are injustice, exclusion, humiliation and poverty. It is quite obvious that desperate behaviour stems from those sources.

More than ever, the quest for democracy, good governance and respect for human rights has become part and parcel of the daily behaviour of peoples and nations. It is this vision that makes it so necessary that unprecedented reform be carried out of the United Nations, which, 60 years after its creation, is duty bound to take full account of the new challenges and new problems that have arisen. In this connection, once again we should welcome the Secretary-General's lucidity and farsightedness, whose report "In Larger Freedom" (A/59/2005) gives us a thought-provoking framework, indicating that comprehensive and thorough reform is essential for our Organization.

Furthermore, the African position on this reform, particularly that relating to the Security Council, is now well known. Burkina Faso is convinced that justice must be done to Africa and has fully joined the other members of the African Union to formulate a common platform that will make it possible for Africa to reclaim without hesitation its legitimate place in the essential United Nations decision-making bodies.

Nevertheless, however committed and however passionate our debate is on the reform of the United Nations, it is of paramount importance that we give even greater priority to the question of development.

Speaking of development, as is so aptly pointed out in the final document of the High-level Meeting that we have just adopted, it is not so much promises and commitments that are lacking but rather their diligent and consistent fulfilment, given the urgency and acuteness of the problems we face. Under these circumstances, Burkina Faso willingly associates itself with all activities that promote genuine international solidarity.

That is why we have associated ourselves with President Lula da Silva's anti-hunger initiative. That is also why we support President Jacques Chirac's international solidarity contribution initiative involving an airline ticket levy, which is aimed at helping to finance the struggle against AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria; Prime Minister Tony Blair's International Finance Facility; Qatar's Fund for Development and Humanitarian Assistance; and President George W. Bush's Millennium Challenge Account, of which my country has just become a beneficiary.

Burkina Faso also welcomes the G-8's recent decision to cancel the multilateral debts of a number of developing countries. We hope that additional countries will be included on that list.

There can be no doubt that trade relations between industrialized and developing countries continue to be marred by inequality — even inequity. It is therefore essential to recall the need to respect the rules of the multilateral trading system, which are the foundation of the World Trade Organization.

It should therefore be clear why Burkina Faso continues to demand an end to the unfair export subsidies of the countries of the North, particularly as concerns cotton.

Burkina Faso is a staunch proponent of democracy, good governance, respect for human rights, and peace and development in Africa and throughout the world. In that context, it is actively involved in peacekeeping operations in Africa and in other regions. Furthermore, my country, which currently holds the chairmanship of the Community of Sahelo-Saharan States and of the International Organization of La Francophonie, is proud to serve the cause of regional integration and of international brotherhood and solidarity.

We believe that working for peace also means respecting international conventions. We therefore believe it to be our duty to discharge our international obligations by acceding to most of the relevant agreements and treaties, such as the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which Burkina Faso has signed and ratified. I should like to take this opportunity to encourage other countries to do likewise in order to speed up the coming into force of that legal instrument, whose importance for world peace and stability is fully evident.

I hardly need recall that the current session's leitmotif is the democratization of the United Nations. It is therefore rather difficult to understand how we can continue to disregard the rights of 23 million Taiwanese people. The time has come to deal justly with that people, which for decades now has demonstrated its commitment to democracy, peace and international solidarity.

Today more than ever, the fate of humankind is in our hands. Moving in concert, in the same direction and inspired by the same principles, we must assume our new common responsibility: to build a world in larger freedom, with development, security and dignity for all.

The Acting President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Nyan Win, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Union of Myanmar.

Mr. Win (Myanmar): I wish first of all to congratulate Mr. Jan Eliasson on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixtieth session. We are convinced that, given his extensive experience in international relations, this session will have a fruitful outcome. My delegation pledges its support and full cooperation in his endeavours for the success of this historic session. I should like also to convey to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, deep appreciation for his efforts in promoting the noble ideals and causes of our Organization.

The strength of our Organization lies in its universality and legitimacy, anchored in the Charter of the United Nations and in the fundamental principles of international law. Among these cardinal principles are respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and

equality of States, non-interference in their internal affairs and the non-use or threat of use of force.

International issues today are of such a scale and complexity that they can be resolved only through multilateralism and by collective action founded on the values of solidarity and universality, as embodied in the United Nations. Only by working together can we hope to discharge our responsibilities. We must at the same time ensure the Organization's credibility by adapting it to the global realities of the twenty-first century.

The High-level Plenary Meeting provided a useful impetus towards meeting the goals and challenges of the twenty-first century. The outcome document of the 2005 world summit included measures to strengthen the United Nations. My delegation wishes to underscore the need to preserve and promote the centrality of the General Assembly as the highest deliberative and decision-making organ of the United Nations. Myanmar also agrees that the Security Council should be reformed to reflect world realities so as to be more effective. Since the Council has primary responsibility for world peace and security, the process of its expansion should be managed with the utmost seriousness. Any decision in that respect should be arrived on the basis of the broadest possible agreement of the membership.

In the context of the reform process, we must avoid the introduction of new concepts that have no basis either in the Charter or in international law. Acceptance of such concepts would go against the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference, which form the very basis of the system of international relations.

I am happy to see that the outcome document contains elements that we hold dear. The document underscores in particular the obligation of all Member States to refrain from the threat or use of force in any manner inconsistent with the Charter of the United Nations. Charter provisions provide the necessary principles for the use of force as a last resort. We have always strongly held the view that Article 51 of the Charter, which deals with the right of individual or collective self-defence, should not be rewritten or reinterpreted.

We believe, however, that there some areas remain that should be further revisited in order to address our concerns.

Regarding the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission as an intergovernmental advisory body, we feel strongly that there must be adequate representation by developing countries in the Organizational Committee. Developing countries have a strong case, since they are major contributors of military personnel and civilian police to United Nations missions.

In strengthening human rights mechanisms, we must address the root causes of problems, namely, the use of selectivity, double standards and politicization. It must be borne in mind that the Charter places human rights in the context of international cooperation. During this session, we will be considering the mandate, modalities, function, size, composition, membership, working methods and procedures of the envisaged Human Rights Council. Given the importance that we all place on human rights, developing countries must play an active role in the negotiation process. We would like to see the initiation of open, transparent and inclusive negotiations at an early date.

The threats we face today do not respect national boundaries; they are interconnected and complex. Terrorism, illicit drug trafficking, transnational organized crime, weapons of mass destruction, poverty and hunger, and the alarming spread of highly infectious diseases such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria are some of the threats we can ignore only at our peril. Efforts and strategies to tackle transnational issues need to be coordinated at all levels and carried out with the necessary respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States.

My country is a State party to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its supplementary Protocols to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, and against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air. It has enacted legislation to control money laundering and to render mutual legal assistance to combat transnational crime. It is a State party to almost all of the United Nations conventions on terrorism. It has also actively participated in regional and international efforts against international crime.

Myanmar is against all forms and manifestations of terrorism. Myanmar is of the view that terrorism should be combated in accordance with international law and obligations. The issue should not be used as a

pretext for intervention in the internal affairs of other States.

Sixty years after the Second World War, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, particularly of nuclear weapons, remains a formidable challenge. Nuclear proliferation is on the increase, and there is also considerable concern that non-State actors could gain access to such materials and technologies. All States must take action in a multilateral framework to make substantive progress towards disarmament, including nuclear disarmament, and nuclear-weapon States should reaffirm their commitment to negative security assurances vis-à-vis non-nuclear States. The outcome document, however, failed to address the important issue of disarmament and non-proliferation. This is an issue of great importance, and we should make every effort to ensure that this vital issue is not sidelined in international forums.

At the twentieth special session of the General Assembly, on narcotic drugs, it was emphasized that no single State can combat the scourge of narcotic drugs on its own. In my country, the problem of narcotic drugs is a bitter colonial legacy. We have therefore made the elimination of narcotic drugs a national responsibility and have formulated strategies and tactics to end the problem of opium poppy cultivation through a 15-year comprehensive plan and the supplementary New Destiny Project. These efforts have resulted in a drastic reduction in opium poppy production. As a result, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) reported a 73 per cent decline between 1996 and 2004. Myanmar's efforts to eradicate poppy cultivation, opium and heroin production and drug trafficking and abuse complement the objectives set forth by the United Nations. Myanmar is also taking urgent measures with its neighbouring countries to exercise control over illegally trafficked precursor chemicals used in the production of synthetic drugs. We have developed bilateral, trilateral and multilateral cooperation in the subregional, regional and international contexts.

World leaders pledged in the Millennium Declaration that the world of 2015 would be better than the one in which we live today. They made a solemn commitment to implement the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). To achieve the MDGs, both the developed and the developing countries must act in a cooperative manner. The developed countries, in particular, must fulfil their commitments and meet the internationally agreed official development assistance target of 0.7 per cent of their gross national product. Debt relief must also be provided to developing countries, including grant-based financing and 100 per cent debt cancellation.

In Myanmar, we are making satisfactory progress towards reaching the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. In our drive to eradicate poverty we have achieved significant results through the designation of 24 special development zones in the states and divisions of the country, in order to achieve equitable and balanced development throughout the country. Myanmar is endeavouring to achieve development mainly relying on its own resources without assistance, particularly from international financial institutions. With external financial assistance, however, our development efforts can be accelerated.

Myanmar is a multi-ethnic nation comprising over 100 races. Immediately after independence, the country had to face the scourge of insurgency. This has posed a serious impediment to our national development endeavours. Based on the bitter lessons of the past, we have today embarked on a programme to make law, order and national stability prevail. As we are able to build peace and stability, we have been able to focus our attention on economic development, giving priority to human resource development. While endeavouring to achieve comprehensive development of the country, we are at the same time implementing a seven-step political programme for a smooth transition to a democratic State.

In this regard, understanding and support from the international community would enable us to achieve our cherished goal more expeditiously. Unwarranted pressures will, however, delay our progress. We, for our part, are resolute in our determination to achieve our goal of establishing a modern democratic State.

Myanmar is poised on the threshold of a new era. We are at a point when all our attention must be devoted to crossing the threshold and entering a new era.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Michael Frendo, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Malta.

Mr. Frendo (Malta): I would first like to congratulate Mr. Jan Eliasson upon his election to the

presidency of the General Assembly at its sixtieth session. He has an important and challenging task ahead. In carrying out his duties, he can be assured of my full support and of that of the Maltese delegation.

I take this opportunity to express our appreciation to the outgoing President of the fifty-ninth session, His Excellency Mr. Jean Ping. The last 12 months have demanded exceptional leadership and commitment from the presidency of the General Assembly. I wish to join others in congratulating Mr. Ping on the firm and successful way in which he has guided this Assembly in the preparations leading to the summit which was just concluded.

The summit has passed on to us significant tasks in the continuing endeavour to sustain and reinforce the processes of multilateral cooperation. It is right that we should take as the central theme of our discussions the follow-up and implementation of the summit conclusions.

In the light of the discussions our leaders had last week, we approach these responsibilities all the more inspired by the imperative for collective action. Such action is incumbent on the international community, as much in dealing with the short-term challenges it has to overcome as in defining the long-term objectives which it seeks to achieve.

Among the most immediate and visible challenges confronting us is the way in which we respond to the natural disasters which at one time or another engulf peoples and societies around the world. The past 12 months have produced awesome evidence of the way in which humanity remains subject to the forces of nature.

The tsunami late last year and Hurricane Katrina only a few weeks ago are only the most prominent among recent major catastrophes which intensify both our sense of vulnerability and our sense of solidarity. In extending our expression of grief and sympathy to the Governments and people afflicted by such disasters, the Maltese people have also extended their offers of succour and relief.

While times like these remind us that nature can be unpredictable in its ferocity, they also teach us that it must always be treated with respect. If managed responsibly, nature's resources can improve our lives considerably. However, if those resources are ruthlessly exploited, humanity will be the ultimate loser.

It is unfortunate but true that the blind forces of nature are not the only cause of extensive suffering among fellow human beings. Political and economic developments, over which Governments, individually or collectively, have at least some element of control, are also factors in play. Nowhere are the combination of natural and man-made causes more dramatic than in those instances of unregulated and often tragic migration flows.

Over the last few years, Malta, like many countries, has been caught in the worrisome increase of unregulated human trafficking across the Mediterranean. In our case, as a small island with a very high population density, the problem quickly assumed crisis proportions.

Malta has a strong and longstanding commitment to help those who need humanitarian assistance. We shall stand by that. We are deeply conscious that long-term action in this area needs to be premised on profound respect for human dignity and strict adherence to the rule of law, including international humanitarian law.

However, the international community must not allow the rights of refugees and persons requiring humanitarian status in accordance with international law to be undermined and prejudiced by international criminal organizations specialized in human trafficking activity. In our case, our ability to respond to genuine cases is fast becoming overwhelmed by the huge increase in illegal immigrants, who are the object of an international criminal network of human traffickers.

Illegal immigration constitutes a collapse of the international legal order and must be addressed unequivocally by the world community as such in order to ensure that the rule of international law is restored in that regard. Countries of origin and transit need to assume their responsibility to uphold the rule of law by vigorously clamping down on international criminal activity in human trafficking. The United Nations and its agencies, particularly the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, are called on to address this issue, which, if it is not addressed, could prejudice the rights of genuine refugees and persons qualifying for humanitarian status in accordance with international law.

At the same time, the spirit of solidarity inspiring action in this area needs also to be put to use in addressing the roots of illegal economic migration, a phenomenon that is harmful not only to the individuals themselves — who fall victim to callous criminal organizations, often paying with their lives — but also to the economic and social development of the countries of origin.

For that reason, we welcome the summit statement reaffirming the principle of solidarity and burden-sharing with regard to assisting genuine refugee populations and their host communities. In that context, we look forward to the General Assembly's high-level dialogue on international migration and development, to take place in 2006. It will give us an important further opportunity to discuss the multidimensional aspects of that problem and identify appropriate ways of dealing with them. Malta will take an active and constructive part in that dialogue.

Last week's summit provided important new guidelines in many critical areas requiring collective action. In the area of development cooperation, there has been a rededication to the objectives first defined in the Millennium Development Goals. Malta joins its partners in the European Union in strengthening its commitment towards increased and more effective development assistance in the coming years. We have set ambitious goals for the successful completion by next year of the World Trade Organization's Doha Round of multilateral trade negotiations.

Malta's national contribution will be commensurate with its possibilities and its level of economic development. Nevertheless, it will take inspiration from our constant endeavour to strengthen and enlarge the areas of peace, prosperity and security for all peoples of the world. We will have a renewed opportunity to reaffirm those commitments in November, when Malta hosts the next Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting and assumes the chairmanship of the Commonwealth for the next two years.

Peace and prosperity must be rooted in human dignity. Our leaders devoted a significant part of their discussions last week to the question of human rights. The summit decisions on this subject may not have gone as far as some of us would have wished. Nevertheless, they were an important step towards the objective of equipping the United Nations with a more effective institutional structure to deal with the defence and promotion of human rights worldwide. In the current session of the General Assembly, we will aim to bring to fruition the summit's decisions in the area of human rights, especially the establishment of the Human Rights Council.

Another area where questions of human dignity are of paramount importance relates to the principle of the responsibility to protect. Our leaders have taken a brave step by reconciling the different strands of that principle, which seeks to encapsulate an important moral duty in the development of the law of nations. Respect for State sovereignty, the strict parameters on the use of force and the overarching commitment to respect and defend human dignity and the right to life owed to all individual human beings are all vital aspects of the decisions taken by the summit in this regard. Further work in that area must continue to be inspired by the sense of solidarity which is shared by people around the world and the common, worldwide ethical responsibility to act to defend the innocent.

Effective post-conflict peacebuilding is an important dimension in which the international community can give practical expression to the notion of collective responsibility. We therefore strongly welcome the agreement to establish the Peacebuilding Commission, which underlines and reinforces the United Nations capacity in the area of peacekeeping and peacebuilding. That is an area of international cooperation where the interface between action at the regional and global levels is critical. The task entrusted to us by the summit to finalize the modalities of the Peacebuilding Commission by December this year is among the most far-reaching responsibilities of the current session of the General Assembly.

Another area where international cooperation is especially important concerns the fight against terrorism. Notwithstanding the differences that might remain on the precise interpretation and scope of the concept, there is a widespread commitment to resisting and eliminating that outrageous and horrific attack on the everyday order and serenity of life in our societies and the right of ordinary people to a secure and peaceful life. On the basis of that recognition, we urge immediate steps to intensify and expand concrete actions that respond to the immediate concerns of our citizens. The elements of a counter-terrorism strategy announced by the Secretary-General earlier this year provide a useful pointer in the right direction.

We need to take our collective action against terrorism further. Malta believes that no terrorist action is ever excusable, and our action against terrorism must be unequivocal, firm and decisive at all times and in all instances. However, we must deeply analyse and examine the roots of the problem. In particular, we must not be passive when we see situations around the world where States have been unable to provide a social welfare net for their peoples and where, as a consequence, the poor and the desperate conglomerate around extremist organizations, which may also practice terror while simultaneously providing welfare assistance to strengthen their popular base. Social responsibility for the provision of welfare should be in the hands of the State, which represents society in all its diversity. In my view, it is imperative that international development programmes should also have that particular focus. The ultimate objective of the current session of the General Assembly should continue to be progress towards the conclusion of a comprehensive convention on international terrorism.

Aside from agreeing on a new set of tasks and measures for reform, at last week's summit our leaders reaffirmed and further developed the concepts and principles that lie at the heart of the United Nations. Those concepts and principles will inspire the deliberations of the Assembly's current session as it considers the many specific issues on its agenda.

Issues of peace and security are a major part of that agenda. They are particularly poignant today, the International Day of Peace.

Malta welcomes the recent evolution of the situation in Palestine, marked by Israel's disengagement from the occupied territories in Gaza and parts of the West Bank. We urge the parties concerned to maintain the momentum for peace that has been created. We acknowledge and salute the bold and tough decisions taken by both the Israeli and the Palestinian leadership, which are making this development possible. We have a clear sense of the complexities and sensitivities involved for both sides in pursuing their respective actions.

Together with our partners in the European Union, Malta wishes to encourage this latest development as a path towards the full resumption of the Middle East peace process. This calls for a continuing determination by both sides not to allow obstacles to stand in the way of their carrying out the next set of actions called for under the Quartet road map: Israel's freezing of all settlement activity, and the cessation of all violent attacks by Palestinians against Israelis everywhere.

We are convinced that the ultimate objective — the existence of two neighbouring, viable sovereign States, living in peace and security, is within reach and certainly worth the effort and sacrifice involved at this stage.

In the Mediterranean, regional cooperation continues to be strengthened through the Barcelona process and other initiatives for subregional consultation. Within the broader framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy, countries to the north and the south of the Mediterranean are working together on a wide range of actions to further peace, prosperity and progress in their region.

Those actions include areas of primary interest for Malta and its immediate neighbours, such as the management of migration flows, the promotion of human rights, democratization, counter-proliferation and counter-terrorism efforts, the acceleration of increased market integration and the objective of improving the social and economic living conditions of all peoples in the region, especially the most vulnerable among them. The further economic, social and political integration of the Euro-Mediterranean region is the primary challenge of the countries belonging to it and would have beneficial consequences for the international community as a whole.

Malta is particularly interested in developments relating to the future enlargement of the European Union. Following the entry of Bulgaria and Romania in 2007, the next stages of that process could encompass a number of countries in our region, such as Croatia and Turkey. Malta believes that the further enlargement of the Union would provide an impetus for positive reform in European countries in general and for the creation of a wider European area of peace, stability, democracy and human rights dedicated to the prosperity of its peoples in a spirit of solidarity.

Malta welcomes the fact that the European Union is increasingly acting as a promoter of peace and cooperation in regions beyond its immediate vicinity. That is the case with regard to the framework for wider cooperation provided by the Strategic Partnership with the Mediterranean and the Middle East.

The expansion of political rights and political participation is an essential dimension of the broader strategy to combat extremism in its various manifestations throughout the world. Malta welcomes the intensifying transatlantic engagement in this regard which, especially in the Middle East, seeks to foster wider participation in support of home-grown economic, political and educational reform efforts for societies in the region.

The European Union is also cooperating increasingly with the African Union in the implementation of actions and decisions agreed within the framework of the United Nations. We hope that that encouraging development will further reinforce the many peacekeeping, humanitarian relief and reconciliation efforts under way in many parts of the African continent.

The institutional set-up and functioning of the United Nations have been the subject of intense scrutiny in recent months. This has laid bare some of the weaknesses of our Organization. At the same time, it has highlighted the many areas in which our Organization is playing a unique and indispensable role in the process of multilateral cooperation. Regrettably, instances of human and institutional failures have been brought to light. At the same time, the much larger number of instances where the institutions are working well and where individuals are acting with admirable commitment and dedication have also been given prominence. In particular, developments in recent months have placed in a sharper focus the commitment and dedication of the Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, in carrying out his exceptionally complex and demanding task.

I would like to take this opportunity to express our deepest admiration and support for the Secretary-General for the major contribution that he has been making towards effective multilateralism and respect for the international rule of law.

Our challenges have never been as global as they are today. Recent natural disasters have emphasized to all of us our vulnerability as the human race. Globalization in all its aspects, including global communication, has not only brought home to us the immediacy of events and information, but has also further accelerated dynamic change in all aspects — political, economic and social — in all societies on Earth. The situation of constant flux and dynamic change further increases the need for the United Nations to be a reformed, effective focal point for the international community, one that is ready to respond to, and proactively work to meet, the challenges of peace, security and development.

This year, which marks the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations, it is useful for us to approach the exercise of reform keeping in mind the words of the Secretary-General in his report, "In larger freedom", that

> "the principles and purposes of the United Nations, as set out in the Charter, remain as valid and relevant today as they were in 1945, and that the present moment is a precious opportunity to put them into practice". (*A/59/2005, para. 153*).

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Ramesh Nath Pandey, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Nepal.

Mr. Pandey (Nepal): The recently concluded High-level Plenary Meeting has rekindled the hopes and aspirations of humanity for enduring peace, security and development. The outcome document (resolution 60/1) is a testimony to our shared vision, collective wisdom and renewed commitment to global partnership to address the most pressing challenges of the twenty-first century. The commitments to eradicate poverty, to resolutely fight against terrorism and to bring about the timely reform of the United Nations as the pivot of multilateralism, can be achieved and translated into action only by our working together.

The outcome document has reaffirmed the world's topmost priority — combating terrorism — as the most pressing global issue. Terrorism is not just the problem of a few countries; it is a threat to world peace and stability. In today's interconnected and interlinked world, terrorism does not remained confined within geographical borders. Its reverberations have been felt far and wide. As every act of terrorism defies basic human values, we must deal it with resolutely, firmly and comprehensively, without double standards or selective interpretations.

As a country that has been suffering from senseless and brutal terrorism for a decade, Nepal unequivocally condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and supports the early conclusion of a comprehensive convention against international terrorism.

His Majesty the King's commitment to multiparty democracy is unflinching and total. His Majesty is determined to re-energize multiparty democratic institutions by restoring sustainable peace and making democracy meaningful, mature, cultured and refined. To that end, we will be holding municipal elections by April 2006, to be followed by national parliamentary elections within two years. That will be an important step forward in re-energizing our democratic institutions through free and fair elections. I urge the countries and organizations which support democracy to come forward and help us to conduct free and fair elections. His Majesty's Government is ready to welcome international observers for the elections. Democracy has been sustained not only as a system of governance but also as a way of life in all parts of the world.

The beauty of our planet lies in its diversity. We reaffirm the acknowledgement in paragraph 135 of the outcome document that, while democracies share common features, there is no single model of democracy. Sovereign countries and peoples must be allowed to have every right to choose the system of democratic governance that is suitable to their needs and aspirations.

His Majesty King Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev recently stated that the use of force alone is not a solution, and that the solution rather lies in talks. We are convinced that lasting peace can be achieved only through dialogue based on trust and confidence. But any overture must be credible and sincere enough to dispel all doubts and suspicions surrounding it. This is our principled position: to work with all constitutional forces in efforts towards establishing durable peace and stability in our country.

His Majesty's Government has initiated programmes to alleviate the plight of people suffering as a result of conflict. The Government has accorded top priority to implementing programmes for broad-based economic growth, social inclusion, anti-corruption efforts and the speedy delivery of essential services to needy people. Special relief package programmes are being carried in an integrated manner to the areas hit by conflict; these include food, shelter, health, education and the rehabilitation of persons internally displaced due to terrorist violence.

International peace and security can be maintained only in an atmosphere of mutual understanding, trust and confidence. Nepal has always stressed that the international community must make genuine efforts for the general and complete disarmament of all weapons of mass destruction, including biological, chemical, nuclear and radiological weapons, in a time-bound manner. However, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and slow progress in global disarmament negotiations have weakened hopes for a safer and more secure world.

We firmly believe that regional mechanisms, including the establishment of United Nations regional centres for peace and disarmament in various parts of the world, can make a significant contribution to global disarmament efforts by enhancing confidence-building. Our commitment is reflected in Nepal's ardent desire to relocate the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific to Kathmandu at the earliest possible date and to continuously pursue the Kathmandu process as a part of the world disarmament campaign.

The role of the United Nations in peacekeeping, peacemaking and post-conflict peacebuilding has assumed great significance over the years. Nepal has been continuously participating in United Nations peacekeeping operations since 1958 and has already contributed more than 50,000 peacekeepers to 29 United Nations peacekeeping missions. With its current deployment of around 3,500 peacekeepers in 13 peacekeeping missions, Nepal ranks among the top five countries contributing troops to the United Nations peacekeeping missions. The sacrifice of the lives of 54 Nepali peacekeepers in the service of humanity in difficult conflict zones around the world stands as testimony to their dedication to the cause of world peace.

Nepalese Blue Helmets have earned international repute for their dedication, discipline, impartiality and professionalism in the discharge of their duties. This is reflected in the inclusion of a Nepali peacekeeper in the United Nations team that went to Stockholm to receive the Nobel Peace Prize, and in the several excellent honours and awards that have been accorded to them, the most recent being in the Central African State of Burundi. Over the years, our peacekeepers have also been involved in peacebuilding, reconstruction and rehabilitation exercises in various United Nations missions.

Nepal welcomes the establishment of a Peacebuilding Commission as an intergovernmental advisory body. This, we believe, will be instrumental to United Nations efforts in effecting sustained recovery and reconstruction and will provide guidance and assistance in laying the foundation for lasting peace in countries emerging from conflict. The Commission's mission, objectives and goals should be clearly defined; there should be equitable representation from among the troop-contributing countries; and the Commission should be adequately funded.

Nepal is unswervingly committed to the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter and its contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security. After almost two decades, Nepal is seeking non-permanent membership of the Security Council for the period 2007-2008; we have an earnest desire to contribute to the Council in its important role in the maintenance of international peace and security. I take this opportunity to renew our appeal to Member States for their invaluable support to Nepal in the elections slated for next year.

Nepal is fully committed to the protection and promotion of human rights. We view all human rights as universal, indivisible and interdependent. I wish to reiterate His Majesty's Government's commitment to the implementation of human rights instruments and international humanitarian law through the strengthening of national human rights institutions and through full cooperation with United Nations human rights mechanisms. The human rights situation in Nepal needs to be properly understood in the context of the unabated violence perpetrated by the terrorists. The tendency to equate the constitutional duty of the Government to protect the lives and property of ordinary citizens with that of the dreadful acts of the terrorists needs to be corrected. The terrorists have exceeded all norms and values by resorting to the most heinous acts of violence, indiscriminate killings, the maiming and abduction of innocent civilians, kidnapping and the forceful recruitment of children as soldiers and extortion and intimidation of the civilian population.

We have been providing asylum to more than 100,000 Bhutanese refugees on humanitarian grounds for a decade and a half. His Majesty's Government has shown its honesty and sincerity and has walked the extra mile for the solution of the refugee problem through a bilateral process. We strongly believe that sincere implementation of bilateral agreements will lead to a lasting solution of the problem. We believe that a lasting solution to the refugee problem will have a salutary impact on Nepal-Bhutan relations, which emanate from monarchical cultures.

Nepal's peace and stability have a great bearing not only on its own people but also on its neighbours and on South Asia and beyond. A stable, peaceful and prosperous Nepal, small in size but strategically located, can greatly contribute to maintaining sustainable peace, stability and prosperity in the region and beyond.

The world has seen that peace and stability in the world community cannot be guaranteed without the peace, stability and prosperity of smaller and vulnerable States. Therefore, the international community must come forward to help countries with special needs, such as least developed and landlocked developing countries, to help them achieve peace, stability and prosperity. The new international financial and development architecture should, therefore, address the legitimate interests and aspirations of those countries.

We call upon the developed countries to augment the level of official development assistance (ODA) and to provide better market access, increased foreign direct investment and substantial debt relief measures to alleviate the hardships of developing countries, especially the least developed and the landlocked ones. We urge the international community to come forward with technical assistance to meet the special needs of the small, landlocked and fragile States with special challenges emanating from terrorism and natural disasters.

Nepal's location between the two fastest-growing economies — India and China — provides us with tremendous opportunities for economic growth and development. We have proposed Nepal as a transit point between our two neighbours, acting as a bridge between them to realize their full economic potential.

Nepal firmly believes that only a strengthened and revitalized United Nations can address the multitude of challenges of the contemporary world. Timely reform and necessary restructuring of the United Nations, preserving and promoting the centrality and sanctity of the principles and purposes enshrined in the Charter, are needed to make the world body more robust and vibrant. Nepal has always looked

to the United Nations as a torchbearer for peace, security and the dignity of nations. It is also our firm view that United Nations reform should give more emphasis to strengthening the Organization's role in promoting international cooperation for the economic and social development of Member States, particularly the developing countries.

Nepal has consistently supported the reform of the Security Council, including its method of work, to make it more representative, transparent and accountable, in order to reflect present-day realities. We have also maintained that the General Assembly, as the principal deliberative organ of the United Nations, needs to be further strengthened.

The six-decade-long journey of the United Nations has been arduous and at times even tumultuous. It has seen high expectations, deep frustration and the harsh realities of realpolitik but has never floundered or wavered from its noble objectives.

This year marks the fiftieth year of Nepal's membership of the United Nations. Since we joined the United Nations, on 14 December 1955, Nepal has cherished its association with the world body and has played an active role in its activities. The Nepali people are proud of their association with the world body and are celebrating the occasion in a special way befitting its significance. Nepal acknowledges its sincere appreciation of the United Nations and its various specialized agencies for their most valuable contribution to our socio-economic development endeavours.

We reaffirm our solemn pledge to the Charter of the United Nations and renew our unwavering commitment to make the Organization more equitable, credible and relevant to face effectively the challenges of the twenty-first century.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Sergei Martynov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus.

Mr. Martynov (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): The summit of our leaders is over. Each of us here at the General Assembly has different feelings about it. Mine, I must say, are anxiety and hope. I am anxious not about the future of the United Nations as an Organization — its existence, after all, is not an end in itself — but about what the future of the United Nations holds.

I place my hope in the future of the United Nations, because the present does not evoke unbridled optimism. There is but one source of optimism for all of us: that the summit, just finished, may serve as a wake-up call for us.

Ernest Hemingway, an American who lived in Europe, evoked John Donne, who wrote, "never send to know for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for thee". This turned out to be appallingly apt. Hemingway's "For Whom the Bell Tolls" was written in the late 1930s and is set at the time and in the country where Guernica was destroyed. It is no coincidence that a depiction of that destruction hangs outside the Security Council Chamber. We all know what happened afterwards: from the ruins of the world the United Nations emerged.

Belarus is not a doomsayer. Indeed, we ourselves experienced the utter horror of the Second World War in greater measure than anyone else and we do not want to see it repeated. But during the sixtieth anniversary year of the victory and of the founding of the United Nations, it is quite appropriate to recall these things.

I do not want to state the obvious: that the United Nations is the Organization of all States, large and small, rich and poor. In this Organization everyone has equal rights and all work together to create the main product: peace. Yet I have to mention this because under the banner of reform there is a move to turn our Organization — de facto and de jure — into an instrument for the domination of some States by others. We all have witnessed this.

A short while ago it was officially proposed that we approve a new decision-making procedure for the specialized agencies: those who pay more would have more votes. Now it is being proposed that we elect members to the main human rights body of the United Nations on the basis of subjective criteria. This is a dangerous trend, and a deviation from the United Nations Charter. It will lead to the splintering of the United Nations.

Does the United Nations really need reform which creates preconditions for the more frequent and more arbitrary use of force at the sole discretion of the mighty? We are against reform which would turn the Organization created out of the ashes of the Second World War into an instrument of diktat by the militarily and economically most powerful States. Does the

United Nations need reform which would divide countries into those "worthy" and those "unworthy" of international assistance, into pupils and teachers in matters of governance and social development? We do not want such reform.

To preserve and build upon the core values of the United Nations Charter, taking into account the realities of today, is the major task of genuine reform that our Organization really needs. The diversity of routes to progress is among those core values. At the summit, the President of the Republic of Belarus stressed that this can ensure the stability of the world and is an enduring value of our civilization (see A/60/PV.5). In today's unipolar world, this value is not only belittled but challenged as well.

What is behind the calls we heard in this Hall last week to "help those who wish to help themselves"? In practice this is a selective approach which recognizes the right to development only for those countries which have adopted government and economic reforms in accordance with a strictly defined model. Let us consider whether we need to clone this model the world over. Does it represent the strength and the value of our civilization? Does it represent the value of the United Nations? What can this one-sided world give to people? Will it be a comfortable home for our children?

Today, as never before, we need to take an honest look at our world, which would allow us to discuss critical problems in a free and transparent manner and to look together for ways to solve them.

An honest look at today's world, for instance, would not allow us to overlook the problem of trafficking in human beings. This disgrace of the twenty-first century has overtaken all regions of the world. The most vulnerable — women and children, whose protection should be the priority task of the United Nations — serve as living merchandise. Forced adolescent labour, the sexual enslavement of women and girls and trafficking in human organs should be decisively opposed by all States and prohibited in their legislation.

There is much to do in this sphere. Today, after all, fewer than half of Member States have ratified the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. Just over a dozen countries have adopted national strategies or action plans to combat trafficking in human beings. But it will be possible to turn this social evil back only through a universal effort. In that respect, we consider it extremely important that all parties involved in that criminal trade be held responsible, including the consumers of those human commodities. It is high time for us to launch a decisive and organized campaign at the United Nations against all forms of trafficking in and exploitation of human beings, and to forge a global partnership against slavery and trafficking in human beings in the twenty-first century.

Looking honestly at today's world we cannot ignore the long-term effects of the Chernobyl disaster. The largest manmade disaster of the twentieth century, it has negatively impacted on the lives of millions of people and caused enormous economic damage. In Belarus alone, the disaster caused US$ 235 billion in damages. The Government of Belarus has accomplished much in the years since the disaster to minimize its effects. Now the time has come to assess the effectiveness of international assistance in that area and to chart the priorities for our joint work for the coming decade. Those are the issues that will be on the agenda of the international conference on the Chernobyl disaster to be held in April 2006 in Minsk. We call on Member States and all those who care about the fate of the millions of Chernobyl victims to support the Assembly's adoption of the draft resolution on Chernobyl. Finally, we propose the convening of a special meeting of the General Assembly on 26 April 2006 to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the Chernobyl tragedy.

Belarus is a country that is used to relying on itself. We are not seeking any unfair international advantages nor do we follow anyone else's political lead. We have confidence in the strength, talent and diligence of our people. That is what allows us to speak and act in a principled and honest fashion in the international arena, without reference to the wishes of the powerful.

It is precisely for that reason that we stand for an open and honest dialogue at the United Nations. This is our common home. Here, the same simple, unconditional and clear principle should apply for all countries: equal among equals. The future of the United Nations rests on that. Belarus is ready to work with everyone to make that future happen.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Adam Daniel Rotfeld, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland.

Mr. Rotfeld (Poland): Let me begin by congratulating President Jan Eliasson on his election. Allow me to assure him of Poland's readiness to support him in his efforts during this session. I would also like to join the European Union presidency — to whose statement we fully adhere — in expressing my words of gratitude to His Excellency Mr. Jean Ping for his leadership during the preparations for the sixtieth anniversary summit.

This year in Poland we are commemorating the twentieth anniversary of the Solidarity movement. In the history of Europe since the Second World War, there have been few events that can be celebrated with a similar sense of pride and satisfaction. The history of Solidarity — and in particular its rebirth in 1989 — opened the way to profound historic changes in Europe and the entire world, including the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Communist bloc. I hope and believe that Solidarity's message still remains an inspiration not only for Poland, but also for the entire world — wherever there are people who uphold or aspire to freedom and solidarity. In that spirit, I would like to repeat our call to celebrate 31 August as a world day of freedom and solidarity. In our opinion, global solidarity should be the central value in and the key tool for achieving a new sense of community and realizing our common interests.

Poland's dedication to the concept of solidarity also draws strength from the fact that Poland itself benefited from foreign aid and support. Today, we are undergoing an important transition in our status: from aid recipient to donor. We hope that Poland's active cooperation for development will serve as a catalyst for further change and help lay the foundation for democracy, sustainable development, human rights and the rule of law.

For us, however, the concept of responsible solidarity is not solely limited to humanitarian endeavours; it means more than assisting the poor and underdeveloped. Solidarity is an operational principle, which generates cooperative attitudes among countries in need, including those plagued by terrorism, natural and manmade disasters, weak State structures and other calamities. Solidarity means rescue rather than relief, remedy rather than alleviation. It should be driven by need — not by right — and cut across dividing lines. It is solidarity that can help to bridge religious and ideological divides and overcome the difficult legacy of the past. Indeed, if we want to build a world without divisions we must first suppress all disputes that feed on past grievances. We have to find a way to reconcile divergent points of view without sacrificing our principles.

The recently concluded High-level Plenary Meeting was a product of enormous efforts to forge a new global consensus on development, security, human rights and United Nations institutional reform. The agenda of the summit was long and ambitious. The preparatory process, as well as the summit itself, offered many insights, ideas and useful recommendations that merit further serious consideration. However, despite the great determination and expectations, we failed to achieve unity in confronting all of the world's most menacing problems.

The United Nations is a ponderous institution and does not embrace change easily. Thus, we should not expect that each and every summit will provide us with revolutionary changes. Real breakthroughs are usually the result of a lengthy process. Consequently, our outcome document should be regarded not as the end of reform, but as a guide for the further practical steps that need to be taken. In that context, I call on Members to devise a plan to implement our summit decisions and to submit it to the General Assembly for adoption. This time, we must break the vicious circle of inaction and ensure a proper follow-up to the summit. Finding workable forms and mechanisms for cooperation has never proved easy and will remain a serious challenge for the months ahead.

The United Nations operates in a constantly changing international environment. We have already identified major new threats, risks and challenges: the fanaticism of international terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, organized crime, States in crisis and failed States. Although we claim to know their nature, we will never be quite able to predict how, where and when those threats will manifest themselves. At the same time, such threats cannot overshadow the importance of addressing their root causes, such as development gaps, poverty, social exclusion, natural disasters, discrimination and intolerance, among others.

We are passing through a transitional stage with all its strains and stresses. International institutions and mechanisms — designed to serve the old international system — must face the challenge of reform and accommodation. The United Nations is not an exception. As a consequence, we have had to find ways and means to respond to the swiftly changing nature of security threats and risks. Thus, the challenge remains the same as for all of us: how do we manage that change?

In this era of globalization and rapid change, no country alone can fully ensure its own security. State security is more than ever before dependent on external determinants. What we need is an innovative and imaginative approach to security, both in the realm of strategy and in its constituent processes. Moreover, we have to develop a new security paradigm according to which the security of individuals is as important as the security of States.

Likewise, we need a new concept of sovereignty that attaches greater importance to protecting the rights of people than to the prerogatives of State power. We must place the human being at the centre of the activities of international institutions.

It is true that the first duty of a Government should be to protect those living within its jurisdiction from genocide, mass killing and human rights violations. However, in certain instances, the responsibility of the international community to take action must be ensured.

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is a longstanding problem that has afflicted the international community for many years. However, in the light of the particularly threatening nexus of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, it has taken on a new dimension. No State is immune to it or is protected from its consequences. At the same time, existing systems of national control and international non-proliferation agreements are not completely effective and are undermined by loopholes and lacunae which enable States and individuals to bypass the regime. It is all the more disappointing, therefore, that the United Nations summit failed to reach an outcome on non-proliferation and disarmament.

To address that challenge adequately, we have to strengthen the three pillars of the nuclear-arms-control regime: non-proliferation, disarmament and the peaceful use of nuclear energy. We should, however, ensure that it works in a harmonious and self-sustaining way.

Another issue is that of enforcement. Legal norms that are not effectively enforced obviously do not serve their purpose. We have to seek ways and means to ensure effective verification and to enforce respect for existing non-proliferation and disarmament obligations. We cannot count solely on persuasion and containment.

More fundamentally, we need a comprehensive review of the existing negotiating machinery. With that in mind, two methods of action are possible. One would be to establish a group of experts; the other — perhaps a better solution — would be to request that a respected international independent research centre — such as, for example, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute — prepare a report containing recommendations on how to make existing United Nations institutions and mechanisms more effective, operational and efficient.

Our concerted efforts to strengthen the United Nations will be doomed to failure if we continue to believe that only security issues matter. They certainly do matter, but security is a much broader concept. It does not involve only the absence of hard or soft threats. It is, above all, about the absence of threats to fundamental human values. Likewise, the eradication of poverty is essential not only to peace and development, but, first and foremost, to the preservation of human rights and standards. Ensuring social justice and reducing inequalities do not involve only the allocation of scarce resources to guarantee security; they also presuppose both human freedom and human dignity.

In that context, Poland welcomes the proposed changes to the United Nations human rights machinery, especially the decision to establish a Human Rights Council. We believe that such an organ would enable us to promote respect for human rights in a more efficient and responsible way.

We should also promote democracy through the United Nations in order to protect human rights and expand democratic freedoms. No one can claim that democracies are free of contradictions and injustices. But it is democracies that best serve to defend the values we want to protect and promote.

In that spirit, on behalf of the citizens of Poland, I would like to reiterate our sincere and strong support

for the Democracy Fund, established to assist countries in their transition to democracy. I truly believe that this new mechanism will help to address differences among and within societies in a spirit of true respect and understanding.

Poland's commitment to the community of shared values does not mean that we disregard the institutional and technical aspects of reform. Institutional adaptation should be characterized by openness, transparency and effectiveness. These are precisely the principles that have guided us in the process of analysing Security Council reform and establishing the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council.

Reform of the Security Council is proving to be an enormously complex and divisive issue. Although necessary, it should not be conducted at the cost of compromising the Council's capacity to meet its Charter responsibilities. The Republic of Poland believes that the effectiveness and efficiency of the Security Council rests on the assumption that membership not only grants additional privileges but also increases responsibilities.

Furthermore, Poland fully recognizes the importance of the ongoing process carried out by the Secretary-General, which is aimed at enhancing effective management of the Organization. We strongly encourage continuing such efforts to strengthen United Nations accountability and its oversight mechanisms as well as to promote the efficient use of its human resources. System-wide coherence, particularly regarding operational capabilities and humanitarian assistance, should be high on the reform agenda. We hope that such an approach will enhance the Organization's capacity to carry out its new tasks and meet its new challenges, thus enhancing the authority of the United Nations and its role in the international system.

Poland's commitments in the framework of the United Nations are not made based on tactical considerations. We are not calculating what we can gain from this or that choice. We do not expect to make political profits or economic gains. But we share a sense of solidarity and responsibility with respect not only to our own country but also to the entire international community.

A system based on values and principles may not be perfect, but it is likely to be more peaceful and, in the long run, more conducive and responsive to the needs of peoples. In that spirit, I hope that this anniversary session will provide a strong impetus to rebuild the community of shared values and enable us to replace the global psychology of competition with a spirit of cooperation.

The Acting President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Nguyen Dy Nien, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam.

Mr. Nguyen Dy Nien (Viet Nam): At the outset, I would like, on behalf of the Vietnamese delegation, sincerely to congratulate Mr. Jan Eliasson on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixtieth session. I am convinced that under his able stewardship this session will be crowned with success. Let me express our deep appreciation for the contributions made by his predecessor, Mr. Jean Ping, to the work of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. I also take this opportunity to pay tribute to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his great efforts over the past year to reform and strengthen our Organization.

Taking place in the context of the many activities commemorating the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations — especially the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly that just concluded — the present session constitutes an event of crucial significance that offers us a great deal of hope and confidence. We believe that Member States will be able to work out effective ways in which to implement the commitments contained in the outcome document (resolution 60/1) just adopted by our leaders, especially those concerning the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). We are confident that, amid both challenges and opportunities and with the necessary wisdom and determination, we will find the right path towards a brighter future for humanity in the twenty-first century.

In today's celebratory atmosphere, we cannot and should not forget stark realities as we continue to see the spread of war and conflict, the resurgence of terrorism, natural disasters, poverty, the outbreak of epidemics and transnational crime, which are threatening the peace, security, independence and prosperity of nations. The people of the world were shocked by the recent terrorist attacks in London, in Sharm el-Sheikh and elsewhere. Viet Nam therefore joins with others in the fight against terrorism of all

kinds. It is our view that, in order to root out terrorism, the international community must seriously and adequately address the phenomena of poverty, injustice and inequality.

Viet Nam welcomes the recent positive developments in the Middle East peace process. It is our consistent policy to support the just cause of the Palestinian people in their struggle for their inalienable rights. In that connection, we welcome Israel's withdrawal from resettlement areas in the Gaza Strip.

Proceeding from its principled position that international disputes should be settled by peaceful means, Viet Nam supports peaceful solutions to the nuclear issue in Iran and on the Korean peninsula.

Considering embargoes and blockades to be unacceptable in the modern world, we call for the early lifting of the unilateral embargo against Cuba. It is Viet Nam's view that the United Nations should be more active in that connection.

The tsunami that affected Asian countries last year and Hurricane Katrina, which hit coastal cities of the United States, both resulting in the loss of a great number of lives and damage worth hundreds of billions of dollars, are reminders of the need for effective early warning systems, preparedness and international solidarity in confronting the forces of nature.

As we are preparing to translate the commitments contained in the outcome document into action to reform the United Nations, I would like to associate myself with the views expressed by the Secretary-General in his report "In larger freedom" (A/59/2005) and reaffirmed in the outcome document concerning the interactive links among peace, security, development and human rights. Viet Nam's experience shows that an environment of peace and political and social stability is indispensable for development and that economic growth, the improvement of people's lives, will help to strengthen peace and stability. In that regard, we believe the United Nations should play a greater role in making those links more interactive.

Viet Nam shares the common view that reform of the United Nations should aim, first and foremost, at enhancing the Organization's efficiency and democracy on the basis of strengthening the fundamental principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter. It is essential to reinforce the central role and power of the General Assembly, a body that stipulates the equal participation of all United Nations Members. Reform of the Security Council should be accorded adequate attention, so that the Council can be turned into a body that is able to perform its functions in maintaining international peace and security effectively. The Council's working methods should be improved to ensure democracy and transparency. The Council needs to be enlarged in both categories of its membership in order to ensure that it truly represents all United Nations Members, as stipulated in the Charter. We believe that developing States should be more adequately represented in that important organ. We would like to reiterate the support we have expressed since 1999 for India, Japan and Germany as permanent members of an expanded Council.

Furthermore, Viet Nam believes that reform of the United Nations must be carried out comprehensively and in a way that ensures a balance between the two equally important and mutually complementary goals of maintaining peace and security and promoting development. An enabling environment for development must be built on the basis of equitable international economic relations, mutual benefit, shared responsibility and the fulfilment of agreed commitments.

In that spirit, Viet Nam supports the proposals on development set out in the report of the Secretary-General and the commitments contained in the outcome document, especially the recommitment of the international community to achieving the MDGs on schedule. Viet Nam welcomes the commitment on the part of some developed countries to allocate 0.7 per cent of their gross national income to official development assistance without any conditions. If developing nations are to achieve the MDGs, it is essential that they be enabled to participate more actively in the global economy. Viet Nam therefore calls on the United Nations to adopt and implement measures to facilitate the entry of developing countries into the World Trade Organization. Moreover, non-tariff and other protective measures aimed at blocking exports from developing countries, under such pretexts as sanitary and phytosanitary standards, should be dismantled.

Guaranteeing and promoting human rights always remain high priorities in the work of the United Nations. Viet Nam supports a greater role for the Organization in that regard. We will continue to spare no effort in contributing to the common cause of

human rights protection. Mindful of the need to reform the United Nations machinery for protecting human rights, we believe that reform must be conducted in a manner that is free from acts of politicization. More in-depth discussions are needed with regard to the issue of establishing a Human Rights Council and the concept of the responsibility to protect, so as to ensure broad support for the measures to be implemented.

The Vietnamese people have just celebrated the sixtieth anniversary of the founding of their democratic State. Having gone through a process of comprehensive renewal, Viet Nam today is a country with high and sustained economic growth and social equity, and we have made significant progress in implementing the MDGs. Today, Viet Nam is a safe and stable country that has further integrated into the global economy and has pursued a foreign policy of independence, sovereignty and diversification, strengthening multilateral ties in its external relations. It is a country that is willing to be a friend and a reliable partner of all countries of the world community.

We have actively participated in various regional, interregional and global cooperation arrangements. Viet Nam has been making great efforts to conclude negotiations for its early accession to the World Trade Organization. I would like to take this opportunity to extend our thanks to those countries that have supported Viet Nam in that connection. We are actively engaged in the cooperation activities of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), as well as with ASEAN cooperation with East Asia. To make a greater contribution to the work of the United Nations, Viet Nam has decided to present its candidacy for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the 2008-2009 term. We are now actively preparing to participate in United Nations peacekeeping operations when conditions are ripe.

To conclude, let me assure the Assembly that Viet Nam will continue to work closely with other countries in the international community to strive for our common goals, among them a stronger United Nations.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Berhane Abrehe, Minister of Finance of Eritrea.

Mr. Abrehe (Eritrea): Allow me to congratulate the President on his election to preside over the General Assembly at its sixtieth session. I wish to assure him and his colleagues in the Bureau of my delegation's support as he guides our deliberations. Allow me also to thank his predecessor, Mr. Jean Ping of Gabon, for his effective leadership at the fifty-ninth session of the Assembly.

In addition, let me take this opportunity to extend my country's deep sympathy and condolences to all Governments and peoples that have suffered tragic losses of life and destruction of property as a result of acts of terrorism and natural and man-made disasters.

At this general debate, I wish to address the Assembly on a matter of grave and immediate importance to my country that has serious consequences for the supremacy of international law and the maintenance of regional peace and security.

Almost four years after the decision of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission, the dark clouds of war once again hang over my country. The legal provisions of the Algiers Agreement, the legal underpinnings of the independent arbitration process and the manner in which that process was established, and the unequivocal decision of the Boundary Commission are all too well known to be repeated here. But allow me to cite the cardinal elements of the Algiers Agreement to refresh members' memories.

Article 4.15 of the Algiers Agreement explicitly states,

> "The parties agree that the delimitation and demarcation determinations of the Commission shall be final and binding. Each party shall respect the border so determined, as well as the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the other party."

I must stress here that violation of the Agreement represents nothing less than blatant disrespect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of a United Nations Member State.

In the sixteenth report on the work of the Boundary Commission of February 2005, when the Commission was forced to close down its field offices in Eritrea and Ethiopia, it warned that,

> "... the line of the boundary was legally and finally determined by its Delimitation Decision of 13 April 2002. Though undemarcated, this line is binding upon both Parties, subject to the minor qualifications expressed in the Delimitation

Decision, unless they agree otherwise. Conduct inconsistent with this boundary is unlawful." (*S/2005/142, Annex I, para. 33*)

The Boundary Commission's decision should not be tampered with. In that regard, article 4.2 of the Algiers Agreement unambiguously stipulates that,

> "The parties agree that a neutral Boundary Commission composed of five members shall be established with a mandate to delimit and demarcate the colonial treaty border based on the pertinent colonial treaties (1900, 1902 and 1908) and applicable international law. The Commission shall not have the power to make decisions *ex aequo et bono*."

The situation with which we are now confronted is therefore not an intractable border dispute requiring the flexibility of the parties. It is squarely a grave matter of an illegal and forcible occupation of the sovereign territory of Eritrea, a United Nations Member State, in clear violation of Article 2.4 of the United Nations Charter.

Ethiopia is not only occupying the village of Badme and other sovereign Eritrean territory; it also continues to build illegal settlements in those areas with a view to, in the words of Secretary-General Kofi Annan, creating facts on the ground.

Ethiopia's unrestrained assault on the rule of law and the sanctity of treaty agreements will have severe consequences not only for the people of the two neighbouring countries and the Horn of Africa but, through the bad precedent it sets, also for other countries and regions, as well as for the credibility and the legitimacy of the United Nations. Yet Ethiopia's acts of occupation continue to be tolerated by the United Nations and the other guarantors of the Algiers Agreement.

Paragraph 14 of the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities (S/2000/601, annex), which is an integral component of the Algiers Agreement, specifies that

> "OAU and the United Nations commit themselves to guarantee the respect for this commitment of the two Parties until the determination of the common border ... This guarantee shall be comprised of:
>
> > "(a) Measures to be taken by the international community should one or both of the Parties violate this commitment, including appropriate measures to be taken under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter by the United Nations Security Council;".

The United Nations and the African Union, as guarantors, are parties to the treaty. They have obligations to ensure implementation of the Algiers Agreement without preconditions. In the event that either Eritrea or Ethiopia fails to implement the Agreement, the United Nations is empowered by the Agreement to invoke Chapter VII of the Charter with respect to the reneging party.

The treaty agreement must be enforced and the numerous international instruments must be applied in order to end occupation and restore legality. The Security Council is mandated to maintain peace and security, inter alia, by eliminating all forms of occupation. Unfortunately, the United Nations and some members of the international community have so far been advancing arguments that are irrelevant to the issue and are in contravention of international law in order to decline from taking the appropriate action.

Existing and aspirant members of the Security Council — both permanent and non-permanent — must fully appreciate the fact that the cardinal principle of the Charter is that membership of the Security Council must be considered as service to humanity and the cause of peace and not as a means to promote and protect their own interests or the interests of their allies. They must uphold the sacred trust to protect the credibility and viability of the United Nations.

Respect for international agreements has been, and must continue to be, the foundation of the principle of peaceful coexistence among nations. Any compromise on that principle will result in the erosion of trust in the international system and will severely damage the functioning of the United Nations.

Eritrea and Ethiopia may soon be dragged once again into a new phase of armed conflict. Yet, there is still an opportunity for a peaceful resolution if the United Nations honours its treaty obligations and addresses the one core issue, Ethiopia's illegal occupation of sovereign Eritrean territory. If the United Nations fails to reverse the occupation, it will be as responsible as Ethiopia for any renewed armed conflict and its consequences.

At this juncture, I wish to remind the Assembly that the United Nations has betrayed the Eritrean people twice during the past 60 years. This would be the third betrayal if it does not respect its treaty and Charter obligations by settling this occupation through peaceful means.

In conclusion, I wish to inform the Assembly categorically that Eritrea is determined, and has the right, to defend and preserve its territorial integrity by any means possible.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Abdullah Abdullâh, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

Mr. Abdullâh (Afghanistan): I have the honour to inform the members of the General Assembly of the successful conclusion of the parliamentary and provincial elections that took place in my country two days ago. As stated by President Karzai, "the holding of these elections was a major success for the people of Afghanistan and a major defeat for those attempting to derail the political process". In defiance of the threats posed by the enemies of peace and stability in Afghanistan, Al-Qaida and the Taliban, millions of men and women enthusiastically travelled to polling stations to cast their votes. With the conclusion of these elections, the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan has now completed the final phase of the Bonn Agreement, sponsored by the United Nations in December 2001.

The determination and political will expressed by the people of Afghanistan have made possible the gradual, yet arduous, transition towards stability and democracy in Afghanistan. During the course of the transition, Afghanistan successfully convened two loya jirgas, adopted a new Constitution enshrining the principles of democracy, held its first-ever presidential elections and, most recently, concluded its parliamentary and provincial elections.

In this context, allow me to express on behalf of the people and the Government of Afghanistan our most sincere gratitude and appreciation to the United Nations, the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force, coalition forces, Provincial Reconstruction Teams, international observers and other international partners for the assistance rendered towards achieving this objective.

Allow me to highlight briefly some of the other achievements that have taken place during the past four years. The Government of Afghanistan continues to make significant progress with regard to the reform of the security sector and the formation of the national army and police in order to further extend and consolidate peace and authority throughout the country. The disarmament and demobilization of 60,000 former combatants has been completed. In that regard, the Government of Afghanistan reaffirms its commitment to complete the reintegration of ex-combatants as the final phase of a successful disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process.

Significant progress has been made in the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Our new Constitution guarantees equal rights for men and women, freedom of expression, freedom of press and political pluralism. The Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission has been institutionalized as an independent body in accordance with our Constitution. The Commission continues to fulfil its mandate.

We have also witnessed the enrolment of more than 5 million children, both boys and girls, in school. Repatriation of millions of refugees from neighbouring countries has also taken place during the past four years. The significant increase in the role of women in the social, political and economic life of the country is also worth mentioning.

The cultivation of opium poppy and the production of narcotic drugs in Afghanistan remains a prime concern of my Government. The establishment of a counter-narcotics ministry, the creation of a special tribunal to prosecute those associated with the cultivation, production and trafficking of illegal drugs and the formation of the Committee on Counter-Narcotics, chaired by President Karzai, are only some of the initiatives taken by the Afghan Government aimed at combating and eliminating the scourge of narcotic drugs.

I am pleased to refer to the recent report of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, which rightly reflected a 21 per cent decrease in the cultivation of opium poppy in Afghanistan during the current year. However, in order to build on this achievement, we must offer alternative livelihoods to rural communities. A successful strategy in combating illicit drugs requires additional measures aside from

asking farmers to plant substitute crops. We have to provide them with agricultural assistance, invest in irrigation, build roads and provide electric power and assistance in generating non-farm employment in rural areas.

Many of the achievements realized in Afghanistan since the signing of the Bonn Agreement would not have been possible without the vigorous support of the international community. I take this opportunity to extend our deep gratitude to all international partners and lead nations which offered generous support throughout the process. In this context, we emphasize the importance of the sustained engagement and support of the international community over the coming years for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Afghanistan, as well as for the consolidation of peace and security.

Despite the achievements to which I referred earlier, the people of Afghanistan continue to face many challenges in their daily lives. Extreme poverty, a high rate of infant and maternal mortality and a lack of resources necessary to ensure basic social services continue to exist.

The outcome document adopted on 16 September 2005 (resolution 60/1) has laid the foundation for a more effective and efficient United Nations better able to address issues relating to development, peace and security, human rights, reform of the United Nations and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

The Government of Afghanistan welcomes the proposal adopted in the outcome document with regard to the establishment of a Peacebuilding Commission. As a country emerging from years of conflict, Afghanistan fully understands the need for a coordinated, coherent and integrated approach to post-conflict peacebuilding. My Government also supports the decision that the Commission should begin its work by no later than 31 December 2005.

As a result of ongoing efforts by Afghanistan and the international community to combat international terrorism, my country no longer serves as a base for Al-Qaida and the Taliban. However, the people of Afghanistan continue to suffer from the scourge of international terrorism. Terrorism remains one of the main challenges to peace, stability and sustainable development in Afghanistan. The continued infiltration of Al-Qaida and Taliban extremists in the south and parts of the east of the country remains a factor contributing to insecurity in my country.

We therefore reiterate the importance of a sincere commitment by all the countries of the region to combating that scourge. The Government of Afghanistan once again vehemently condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. In that context, we support every effort aimed at the successful conclusion of a comprehensive convention on international terrorism by the end of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly.

The Secretary-General clearly highlighted the interrelationship between development and security in his report "In larger freedom" (A/59/2005), which, in paragraph 2 of the annex, states, "There will be no development without security and no security without development". The case of Afghanistan could not be more relevant in that respect.

Achieving the Millennium Development Goals in Afghanistan is not just a desirable humanitarian objective, but a necessity for the security of the country, the region and the world. Attaining the Goals will require a substantial amount of international aid, provided in a coordinated and sustained manner.

My Government is in the process of preparing Afghanistan's national development strategy, which will be presented at the donor conference on Afghanistan scheduled to take place early next year. The national development strategy encompasses a clear approach to achieving our national development goals and addresses vital areas such as capacity-building, fiscal sustainability, building infrastructure and prioritizing projects. The Afghanistan national development strategy will also present Afghanistan's overarching strategy for promoting growth and reducing poverty, and will serve as the country's overall strategy for attracting international assistance.

The national development strategy will be prepared in a consultative process with all stakeholders, including donors, civil society, the private sector and provincial councils. Through a post-Bonn compact, Afghanistan will subscribe to a new set of timetables and benchmarks for providing security, building democratic institutions, protecting human rights and reducing extreme poverty in accordance with our MDG targets, reforming the administration, eliminating corruption, ending the production of and

traffic in narcotic drugs and developing cooperation with our neighbours.

As a landlocked country, Afghanistan will not be able to achieve its intended economic goals without the support and mutual cooperation of its neighbours. The Government of Afghanistan emphasizes the importance of regional economic cooperation for the benefit of all countries in the region. Trade plays a major role in promoting economic growth, employment and development for all. The volume of trade between Afghanistan and its neighbours has been growing steadily. Just last year, the estimated value of trade between Afghanistan and its neighbours amounted to $1.5 billion.

I would like in conclusion to express Afghanistan's full commitment to the implementation of the outcome document. We are of the conviction that the adoption of that historic document will further enhance the central role of the United Nations in addressing the threats and challenges facing humanity at the dawn of the twenty-first century.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Victor Manuel Barbosa Borges, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and Communities of the Republic of Cape Verde.

Mr. Barbosa Borges (Cape Verde) (*spoke in Portuguese; English interpretation from French text provided by the delegation*): I would like to express congratulations and support to the President of the General Assembly for having chosen as the theme of our debate, "For a stronger and more effective United Nations: follow-up to and implementation of decisions made in the High-level Plenary Meeting of September 2005".

Ten years before the target date, we are still faced with doubts and questions about the actual achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), particularly in Africa. There are two interconnected elements at the heart of this matter: States' development policies; and the effective fulfilment of the commitments entered into by the international community. I have no intention of evaluating national policies, but it is clear that the achievement of the MDGs will require far-reaching adjustments in our national policies and increased efforts to reorganize and manage our budgets. Furthermore, the emergence of a new African leadership, which is bringing us together again in our commitment to promoting development, democracy, peace and political stability, is an opportunity for the international community to provide more consistent support for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Unfortunately, despite a great deal of discussion about the MDGs, we are still falling short with regard to the commitments undertaken, to the clear distress of the populations afflicted by pandemics such as malaria, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS, which is spreading at an alarming rate.

As the head of State of Cape Verde said when addressing the Assembly during the High-level Plenary Meeting last week (see A/60/PV.5), achieving the Millennium Goals and building a freer world based on higher levels of well-being, tolerance, peace and security are within reach for humankind.

In order to achieve our goal, we need political will, not just statements about political will or pious expressions of hope for development. It is the responsibility of the General Assembly at this session to ensure that the summit outcome (resolution 60/1) is effectively implemented. However, there can be no doubt that the implementation of the outcome will be a test of the policies that have been set out, as well as of the negotiating skills of Member States, as we strive to achieve a better balance on international relations, further the democratization of international governance and strengthen peace and security at the regional and national levels. We must redouble our efforts this year.

In the context of the reforms proposed by the Secretary-General, Cape Verde has been chosen to host the joint office initiative, with the participation of United Nations programmes and agencies in the field. May I once again reiterate my Government's support for this initiative, while at the same time emphasizing the absolute need for there to be adequate preparation for this experiment, as well as internal adjustments consistent with the option of joint representation. We are convinced that the joint office initiative will make it possible to concentrate resources more effectively on priority challenges and the substantive aspects of development.

On 5 July 2005, the Republic of Cape Verde celebrated the thirtieth anniversary of its independence; these 30 years have been marked by considerable sacrifice and effort in a country without natural resources. Throughout this period, fortunately, all the

development indicators have shown upward movement. Under a resolution adopted by the General Assembly in December 2004, Cape Verde has made sufficient progress to be no longer included in the list of least developed countries. This "graduation" is an explicit recognition of the work done by the people of Cape Verde; and, undoubtedly, it is also the result of the international aid provided by various partners. Therefore, I should like to take this opportunity to express to all of Cape Verde's development partners, both present and absent in this Hall, our profound gratitude for the solidarity thus extended to us.

At the risk of repeating myself, I should like to recall the following points. The "graduation" of Cape Verde is a result of the fact that the country satisfied two of the three established criteria. I am referring to the per capita income per inhabitant and the human development index. The failure to identify the third criterion, that of economic vulnerability, which is by far the most important one, illustrates the kind of fragile situations that can be experienced by a small island country that is permanently afflicted by drought and external shocks, of which the increase in oil prices is a very illustrative example.

For success to be meaningful over the medium and long term, "graduation" should be accompanied by the appropriate measures needed to ensure continuity of the development process. It is of fundamental importance to define the goals, their duration and the practical modalities for this transition, and it should be done as quickly as possible. What has been achieved by Cape Verde, thanks to the judicious management of foreign aid, cannot obscure major structural vulnerabilities. Parenthetically, I would like to reiterate once again an appeal to the international community to give particular attention to the specific problems of development in small island States.

We are convinced that, when Cape Verde leaves the group of least developed countries in January 2008, we will have agreed upon a common frame of reference, together with our development partners, one that is based on General Assembly resolution 59/209 and is in step with the spirit of smooth transition, where emphasis will be placed on questions of trade, financing for development, including modalities and more effective and innovative instruments that fit the needs for accelerated economic growth of a "graduated" but vulnerable country.

We continue to be convinced that the development target we share with our partners must not lead to our being penalized for good governance and a positive development dynamic. For our part, we will continue to rely on the solidarity of our partners, including the United Nations.

Regarding financing for development and the urgent need to adjust the practices and instruments of aid to the requirements of achieving the MDGs, I should like to comment on the decision taken by the Group of 8 to eliminate external debt. The Government of Cape Verde is delighted at the Gleneagles decision to forgive the external debt of 18 countries, mostly African ones. This is a shot of oxygen for the development process of the recipient countries.

That having been said, however, the Government of Cape Verde believes that we will need to analyse the problem further in order to ensure that solutions are integrated effectively into the international agenda. On the one hand, the situation of poor countries, which are deeply indebted, requires an increase in solidarity. On the other hand, we also believe that some gesture should be made towards the medium-income countries, particularly those that are bereft of natural resources and only slightly indebted and who, at the same time, honour their debt servicing in a structural framework that is marked by budgetary constraints. Otherwise, the message underlying the decision to pardon the debt will be extremely ambiguous and could lend itself to various interpretations.

I would like to end with what one normally starts with, and that is by congratulating the President on his election to lead the sixtieth session of the General Assembly. My congratulations are equally extended to Sweden, his country, which has always given invaluable assistance promoting the self-determination of peoples, world peace and development. I would also like to express my gratitude to his predecessor, Minister of State Jean Ping, for the competent and wise discharge of his functions during a period of intense and difficult negotiations.

May I finally address our gratitude, encouragement and confidence to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan. His vision of the future of the world and of the United Nations deserves to be supported by us all, so that our Organization, which belongs to all of us, can respond to the growing and complex challenges of the current world.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Siosiua T'Utoikamanu, Minister for Finance of the Kingdom of Tonga.

Mr. T'Utoikamanu (Tonga): May I first take this opportunity to congratulate the President on his election to lead the work of the General Assembly. Let me also reassure him of Tonga's support and full confidence that the sixtieth session of the General Assembly will be fruitful and successful under his very able leadership.

I would also like to give due recognition to the sterling work of his predecessor, Mr. Jean Ping, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Gabon, during the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly.

I also join others in commending Secretary-General Kofi Anan for his leadership of our Organization.

As we celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of our Organization, we can pause and reflect on where we are, and on the basis of our experience in the past and the opportunities available for us in the future. We can chart a roadmap that will ensure that we, the Member States, deliver on our commitments to the purposes and principles of the Charter and international law, which are indispensable foundations of a more peaceful, prosperous and just world. Tonga shares the concerns voiced by several other delegations that business cannot proceed as usual, as this will continue to affect the role and relevancy of our Organization and the important place of multilateralism in accomplishing its aims.

The Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change delivered the landmark report expected of it. The Panel's far-reaching findings and recommendations laid a firm foundation for what our Foreign Minister described last year as "constructive engagement". Tonga remains optimistic that the level and intensity of engagement among Member States can still produce a lasting legacy of improvement and the necessary changes for our Organization and its important work.

Last Friday, at the conclusion of the historic High-level Plenary Meeting, heads of State and Government adopted the outcome document, which provides multilateral solutions to the problems in development, peace and collective security, human rights, the rule of law and the strengthening of the United Nations. The baton has now been passed on to us to begin the implementation phase of the summit's outcome, and we need to rise to the challenge to make good on our promises.

The development agenda remains the first priority for small island developing countries, including Tonga. Over three decades, we have accumulated experience in national and integrated regional development planning and have, therefore, fully embraced our primary responsibility for our own development. The achievement of the Millennium Development Goals has been incorporated into our wider development efforts.

The financing of these development programmes, however, continues to depend on bilateral and multilateral official development assistance (ODA), as well as on concessionary loans from regional and global financial institutions.

In this regard, we welcome the proposed increased resources that will become available as a result of the establishment of timetables by many developed countries to achieve the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product (GNP) for ODA by 2015. We congratulate those countries that have already fulfilled their commitment in meeting the required target. The recent efforts and initiatives to enhance the quality of aid and to increase its impact, including the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, are also welcome steps.

ODA, while necessary, will be insufficient on its own and would have to be complemented by active promotion of foreign direct investment, improving trade access and effective development partnerships.

The outcome document emphasizes that one of the critical challenges to economic growth is to ensure that the necessary internal conditions are put in place for mobilizing domestic savings. Tonga embarked on a public sector and economic reform programme in 2002. To date, several important pieces of legislation have been enacted through the Legislative Assembly, including the Public Finance Act of 2002, to modernize the way the Government manages its finances and to provide for more transparency; the Public Service Act of 2002, to modernize employment and remuneration methods; and the Public Enterprise Act of 2002 to provide for increased accountability by public enterprises. A programme of reform of Tonga's system

of taxation is also under way to bring it into conformity with international norms and bilateral and multilateral obligations.

Tonga welcomes the recognition in the outcome document of the special needs and vulnerabilities of small island developing States and the commitment to address those needs and vulnerabilities through full and effective implementation of the Mauritius Strategy adopted by the International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

Energy continues to play a crucial role in Tonga's sustainable development strategies, and maintaining a fine balance between energy, the environment and the economy is a national priority. Tonga's increasing reliance on imported petroleum products to satisfy its energy needs means that it is particularly vulnerable to external events that affect the price and availability of petroleum products. In this regard, Tonga reiterates its concern over the continuing escalation of the price of oil and its negative impact on its economy. Concerted efforts will have to focus on research and development for alternative sources of energy.

Tonga recognizes the need to promote gender equality with the implementation of its National Policy on Gender and Development, which was approved in 2001.

Remittances are a welcome source of foreign exchange, and Tonga is recorded as one the countries most dependent on them as they amount to 39 per cent of gross domestic product. We therefore acknowledge the important nexus between international migration and development and the need to deal with the challenges and opportunities that migration presents to countries of origin, destination and transit. We also look forward to the General Assembly's high-level dialogue on international migration and development, to be held in 2006.

We join with others who have voiced their regret at the failure of the 2005 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference and reiterate the importance of implementing the three pillars of the Treaty.

Tonga supports the call to establish the mandate, modalities, functions, size, composition membership, working methods and procedures of the new Human Rights Council as soon as possible during the current session of the General Assembly.

We fully recognize that post-conflict peacebuilding is vital to achieving sustainable peace and support the establishment of a Peacebuilding Commission by the end of 2005.

We strongly condemn terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, committed by whomever, wherever and for whatever purpose, as it constitutes one of the most serious threats to international peace and security. We also look forward to the successful conclusion of the comprehensive convention on international terrorism during the present session of the Assembly. Tonga continues to support the work of the Counter-Terrorism Committee and has progressed well in drafting domestic legislation to put into effect all of the 12 counter-terrorism conventions to which we have acceded.

We applaud the efforts and proposals for a comprehensive package of reforms to revitalize the General Assembly and to strengthen the Economic and Social Council, to enable them to fulfil their mandates as envisaged in the Charter. We also support the ongoing work of the Secretary-General to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Secretariat.

Perhaps one of the more intense engagements among our membership involves the reform of the Security Council. Tonga maintains its support for Japan's proper and permanent place on any enhanced Council. The emergence, in particular, of prospective permanent members and novel ideas on criteria has made this issue more deserving of further patience, poise and pragmatism. However, momentum and advances on readily agreeable aspects of our reform agenda should proceed to fruition.

The ever-changing landscape of the Middle East continues to present hopeful signs suggesting that an enduring peace is possible. Genuine gestures, like that involving Gaza, by Israel and the Palestinian Authority, offer a platform upon which mutual borders might be secured and upon which statehood might flourish.

Regional organizations play an important role in supporting and complementing the interests of member countries in various fields, and Tonga acknowledges the role of the Pacific Island Forum in that regard. At a regional level, Tonga is fully committed to its

obligations in ensuring peace in the region and continues to support the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands with the third deployment by the Tonga Defence Services currently in operation in the Solomon Islands. The Pacific Plan, which was articulated by our Pacific Forum leaders for the realization of their vision through deeper and stronger regional cooperation and integration in the areas of economic growth, social development, security and environmental protection, will be tabled for consideration by the leaders in October of this year. Tonga, therefore, welcomes the call for support of a stronger relationship between the United Nations and regional organizations.

The Kingdom continues to observe a "one-China" policy that recognizes Taiwan as an integral and inalienable part of China. An essential component of that policy properly acknowledges that common and mutual issues are ideally left to an across-the-Strait framework dialogue, as opposed to any multilateral formula, however well conceived.

Tonga continues to develop and strengthen its "Look East" policy, in particular with China. Earlier this year, the Kingdom established a diplomatic presence in Beijing to give strong voice to its interests and impetus to its exploration and pursuit of mutually relevant and beneficial ventures, including tourism, trade, aviation and security.

The world is watching us. Let us not renege on our commitments but push forward on the reforms that are essential to ensuring that multilateralism remains the most efficient and effective way to address global problems and issues.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Raymond Ramazani Baya, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Ramazani Baya (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): It is a pleasure to join preceding speakers in congratulating Mr. Jan Eliasson on his election as President at the sixtieth session of the General Assembly. In particular, I welcome the fact that the international community has given him the honour of being elected President of the General Assembly, at its present session at which we are commemorating the sixtieth anniversary of the Organization. Moreover, at the present session we shall, above all, work to implement the commitments undertaken by the heads of State or Government to strengthen United Nations reform and adapt the Organization to the changes on the international stage so that it can remain the forum for coordination and debate, an irreplaceable instrument for conflict prevention and management and the body for upholding international law and the integrity of States.

I also congratulate the President at the fifty-ninth session, Mr. Jean Ping, Minister of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and la Francophonie of the Gabonese Republic. With his great human qualities and his skill as a statesman, he carried out his mission with tact and personal engagement.

Finally, allow me to convey to Secretary-General Kofi Annan the encouragement and the gratitude of Mr. Joseph Kabila, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for his commitment to finding a solution to the crisis in the Great Lakes region and for the importance that he attaches to the protection of the values of human dignity.

Mr. Eliasson is presiding over the General Assembly at a pivotal moment for our Organization. It would be hard not to make a connection between the history of my country, the President's mandate and the destiny of an eminent citizen of his country, Sweden, who gained fame in my country for his commitment to the cause of peace. I am referring to Mr. Dag Hammarskjöld, the second Secretary-General of the United Nations.

As the President has assumed his functions in September, it should be recalled that on 20 September 1960, my country became a Member of the United Nations. And on 18 September 1961, the late Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld gave his life for his commitment to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I pay tribute to the memory and the courage of that hero, as well as to the civilian and military members of the United Nations Operation in the Congo who lost their lives alongside our soldiers while defending the sovereignty and the integrity of our territory.

A comparison of the United Nations involvement in the Congo in 1960 and that of the present reveals a number of similarities, including the tireless dedication to the cause of peace demonstrated by the Blue Helmets. My country has twice benefited from peace operations, and we know the price paid by United Nations forces to save us from disaster. Our first-hand

experience of United Nations intervention strengthens our belief that now, more than ever, the world needs a strong, reformed United Nations.

As discussions on Security Council reform have reached a crucial stage, it is time for us to acknowledge that, in spite of its limitations, the United Nations — the forum of nations — has become the conscience of humanity. Its present and future role can be addressed only when one reflects on recent changes in the world and on the Organization's capacity to adapt to the new challenges posed by development, the debt crisis, the specific needs of the least developed countries, terrorism and the issues of human rights, peace and collective security.

In that context, it is desirable for the United Nations to modify its structure in order to be better able to face new and old challenges and promote the values of our civilization, founded on the principles of freedom and democracy.

The desired enlargement of the Security Council, as envisaged, is now a requirement of the greatest democratic importance. But while it is necessary, it is not in itself sufficient to ensure the harmonious and efficient functioning of the United Nations system. We must go further, beyond mere expansion, to realize the ambitions that Member States have for the United Nations. Security Council reform should not overshadow the need to review the other United Nations organs, in particular the Economic and Social Council, the Secretariat and the General Assembly, with a view to strengthening their mandates, and enabling the President of the General Assembly to play a primary role in seeking solutions to international problems.

Also in the context of reform, my country looks forward to the establishment of the new Peacebuilding Commission and to the creation of multi-year standing funds. That would enable countries emerging from conflict to receive real, substantial contributions in support of rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts and would help those countries lay the foundations for sustainable development.

The international community has invested heavily in the work of rebuilding State structures in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and has provided significant support through the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC). I convey the deep gratitude of the Congolese people.

In the context of the holding of transparent multiparty elections to put an end to the crisis of legitimacy and the endless loop of transitions, the Democratic Republic of the Congo is taking giant steps towards concluding the transition process. I would like to assure the Assembly of the determination of the Government of National Unity to carry out the transition in accordance with the constitutional timetable.

The adoption by referendum of a draft constitution by the end of the year will make the process irreversible. The elections must take place. And it is certain that they will take place, because of the great determination of the Congolese people and the great commitment of the Government of National Unity. The harmonious progress in the process, despite some logistic constraints related to the immense size of the national territory and the complexity of the voter registration process, leads us to predict with confidence that the various electoral deadlines will be met. To date, nearly 12 million voters have been registered, bearing out the enthusiasm that has been in evidence since the start of the registration process.

It is now urgent to quickly stabilize the security situation, including, in particular, through the prompt resolution of the worrisome issue of the disarmament of foreign armed groups, which threaten to disturb, even compromise, the proper holding of elections.

It should be recalled that it is urgent to support the efforts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to put an end to the presence of armed groups in the eastern part of the national territory and ensure their repatriation, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, the African Union and the Economic Community of Central African States. Adequate support for the training and equipping of our restructured and integrated armed forces, as well as the firm engagement of MONUC, will lead those groups to disarm. However, the Democratic Republic of the Congo has never preferred the military option or ever felt that it was the only possible way to ensure the repatriation of the foreign armed elements that have proliferated in the North and South Kivus. Therefore we have maintained contacts, through various intermediaries, with representatives of the Front démocratique pour la libération du Rwanda, which has

kept open the possibility of sustained voluntary disarmament followed by the voluntary repatriation of Rwandese armed elements. Two sets of consultations were held — in March and in September 2005 — but so far they have not led to the hoped-for results. If they fail, we will have to reconsider the option of forced disarmament, no matter what the cost for the Congolese armed forces, to whom it will fall to enforce it.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo is grateful to the Security Council for having authorized MONUC to take action under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, whose application has had real results in Ituri. Recourse to Chapter VII in other areas, however, in particular in the North and South Kivus, has not yet had the full deterrent effect anticipated. Therefore, is it not time to consider, as the Security Council has wished, what assistance to provide to the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo to realize the forced disarmament of the militias? Naturally, the successful outcome of such an operation will also depend on the determination of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and of MONUC, and, above all, on the sincere commitment of our neighbours. The latter must refrain from any form of negative interference that would compromise efforts to neutralize the militias and other armed groups.

Beyond our security and strictly political concerns, we must also meet the legitimate needs of a population that for years has been deprived of its basic subsistence requirements. The economic and social policy of the Transitional Government seeks, in the short term, to meet the requirements to combat poverty, as well as to restructure the legal and financial sectors and to help restart productive activities — areas where a certain degree of success has been achieved. The State budget has increased substantially, the exchange rate has been stabilized, inflation is under control and, for the past three years, growth rates have ranged from 6 to 7 per cent. Those favourable economic developments have enabled us to launch a number of recovery plans in the areas of basic infrastructure and education, as well as in the field of health, by combating major epidemics and pandemics.

But the pace of progress in the social sphere is slow: very slow, in view of the people's numerous expectations. In order to consolidate the gains we have made, we will need to pick up the pace of our activities and rapidly institute social initiatives that will have a visible impact. We therefore welcome the commitments made by our bilateral and multilateral partners to assist us in that direction.

The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is well aware of the importance of regional cooperation and of good-neighbourliness. For that reason, we support the Secretary-General's initiative — in conjunction with the Group of Friends of the Great Lakes Region — to organize in Nairobi an International Conference on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the region.

My country has been the main battleground of an armed conflict, with a toll of over 3 million dead, massive infringements of human rights and of international humanitarian law, the destruction of hospitals, schools, roads and bridges and the looting of natural resources and other forms of wealth. For that reason, my country hopes to be one of the main beneficiaries of the special reconstruction fund that has been set up within the framework of the International Conference on the Great Lakes region, and a priority zone in the subregion for rehabilitation and development.

The trials experienced by the Congolese people, and by all the peoples of the Great Lakes region, enable us to understand the aspirations for peace voiced by other peoples. We therefore support the peace process in the Middle East. The Democratic Republic of the Congo welcomes the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the Gaza Strip. We believe that that initiative is an important step forward, one that should be consolidated in order to ensure peace and to put an end to the cycle of violence in that region. The sensitivity and the complexity of that situation further emphasize the commitment made by the State of Israel and by the Palestinian Authority to reach a negotiated solution to the crisis in the Middle East.

I also wish to commend the United Nations and the African Union for their efforts to bring the elections in Burundi and the Central African Republic to a successful conclusion. The positive outcome of the reconciliation processes in those two countries, as well as the prospects for positive developments in the situation in the Congo, bode well for the emergence of a new period of stability, democracy and prosperity for Central Africa.

In view of new threats, I wish to reaffirm the commitment of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the principles upon which our collective security is based. The coming years will be a time of increased competition among nations in the areas of trade, financial markets and research, including nuclear research; rapid globalization, made possible through information and communication technologies, has given rise at times to sometimes uncontrolled liberalization and bitter competition. It is thus our historic responsibility to equip the United Nations with the resources and structures not only to keep the peace wherever necessary and to guarantee our collective security wherever it is threatened, but also to better address issues of economic and social development, to establish more equitable rules of the game for international trade, to fight collectively and effectively against illiteracy, ignorance, intolerance, epidemics, disease and natural disasters, and, naturally, against terrorism, violence and injustice in all their forms so that we can build a more brotherly, peaceful, humane and just world.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Besnik Mustafaj, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Albania.

Mr. Mustafaj (Albania) (*spoke in French*): Let me first convey, on behalf of the people and the Government of Albania, the most profound sentiments of sympathy, friendship and solidarity to the people of the United States and to President Bush with respect to the human suffering and the material damage caused by Hurricane Katrina.

I would like to wish Mr. Jan Eliasson every success in carrying out his important mission. I take this opportunity to assure him of the full cooperation of my country in accomplishing the undertakings ahead of us. Let me also join others in thanking Mr. Jean Ping for the dedication he demonstrated as president of the General Assembly at its previous session and for the efforts he invested in the revitalization of our Organization.

Albania aligns itself fully with the statement made at the 9th plenary meeting by Mr. Jack Straw, Foreign Secretary of the United Kingdom, on behalf of the European Union.

I am privileged to address the Assembly on behalf of the new Albanian Government, which took office following recent parliamentary elections. I will set out some of my country's positions on issues of concern to us all and outline my Government's strategic priorities in the field of foreign policy.

The fact that, just a few days ago, a large number of heads of State and Government gathered at the United Nations to assess the progress made in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and to debate the reform of the Organization should be taken as a reaffirmation that multilateralism is a driving force in global policy. That also serves once again to confirm that we are living in a very complex and multidimensional environment that clearly requires comprehensive, global and coherent reactions.

The need for enhanced regional and global cooperation has never been more pronounced. Albania therefore supports the outcome of the High-level Plenary Meeting, which reaffirms our faith in the Organization, the importance of the core values and principles of international cooperation, the global partnership for development, concerted actions to strengthen collective security and peace, the fight against terrorism, promoting human rights and the rule of law and the strengthening of the United Nations, in particular its comprehensive reform. Albania believes that, through concrete and speedy action, the sixtieth session of the General Assembly will constitute an important and meaningful step towards the implementation of all the commitments to which I have referred.

Albania believes that the United Nations should be further strengthened in order to continue to play a decisive role in the efforts of the international community to create a safer, more stable and prosperous world. We would like to reiterate our appreciation for the efforts of the Secretary-General with regard to reforming the United Nations. Albania shares his view that the United Nations needs to have the legitimacy and flexibility to adapt itself to the circumstances of a changing world. The Security Council clearly has enormous responsibility in that regard. My country fully supports the reform of the Security Council. It should be noted, however, that we view Council reform from the standpoint of improving its working methods and transparency and of adjusting and improving the decision-making system. We firmly believe that Members acting together have the necessary power and capacity to achieve very broad consensus on Council reform.

The roles of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Secretary-General must not be underestimated. Their potential has not yet been fully explored. The success of the reform effort can be assured if it is coherent and aimed at the Organization as a whole. Albania is encouraged by the outcome document of the High-level Plenary Meeting with regard to the strengthening of the United Nations. We reaffirm our willingness to work with all delegations to achieve the broadest consensus possible on the most important reform issues.

Albania believes that the Peacebuilding Commission will be an essential and efficient tool for developing more coherent, relevant and better funded strategies and for giving timely political attention to a country making the transition from conflict to sustainable development. In that connection, the reform of the United Nations will better enable the Organization to improve the work of the international community and assist countries in the post-conflict phase.

We believe that the exchange of views on the establishment of the Human Rights Council will be completed soon. An action-oriented Council with a credible membership will improve the quality of United Nations efforts in the area of human rights. Moreover, we fully support the strengthening of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, including increasing its budget.

Albania believes that the initiative to establish a Democracy Fund is an essential component of reform. My country will make every effort to support the Fund. Like other friendly countries, we consider it an effective mechanism to support new democracies, strengthen civil society and establish institutions supporting the rule of law.

The numerous tragic events of recent years have confirmed that terrorism, which has taken thousands of innocent lives, is the most urgent threat facing the world today. My country will remain committed to fighting this evil. We support Security Council resolution 1624 (2005), which was adopted during the high-level summit. We also join the solemn appeal to finalize the comprehensive convention against terrorism during the course of this session of the General Assembly. We believe that acts of terrorism carried out with weapons of mass destruction can have unprecedented consequences for humankind.

Arms control is a key element of my country's security policy. In that regard, I should like to point out our ongoing support for the further strengthening of crucial international disarmament and non-proliferation instruments. Albania is therefore fully committed to cooperate on disarmament and non-proliferation issues both in its own region and beyond. To that end, we have put in place robust measures at the national level to prevent the illicit trafficking in arms on our territory. In addition, with regard to implementing commitments on the control of small arms and light weapons, we have amended our national legislation in order to bring it closer to that of the European Union in areas such as licensing, strengthening import and export regimes and enforcement. Part of the Government's programme in this area has included the destruction of some 200,000 small arms and light weapons that had been in the hands of civilians. Moreover, in cooperation with foreign donors, the Government has drafted a programme to destroy all chemical weapons materials on our territory, thereby contributing to the strengthening of security in the region and beyond.

Albania is continuing to demonstrate the growing maturity of its democracy. The year 2005 is an election year in Albania. Last July's parliamentary elections and orderly transfer of power were tangible developments that had a positive impact on the country's future political, economic and social development.

Albania believes that good governance is a key element in improving the lives of all its citizens. Good governance is also an essential precondition to guaranteeing sustainable economic growth and eradicating poverty. In that regard, we will work tirelessly to strengthen the rule of law, promote transparency in the decision-making process and increase the Government's sense of responsibility to serve all citizens.

With regard to the economy, the new Albanian Government's priorities in the coming years will be to fight corruption and the factors that encourage it, promote free competition and relentlessly combat monopolies.

A set of measures is being contemplated to improve the national education system. Among those measures is the opening of universities to all who want to pursue higher education.

In addition, for the first time in its history, a woman heads Albania's National Assembly. This is a strong indication of Albania's serious commitment to gender equality.

The new Government is committed to improving the country's macroeconomic indicators. We are determined to develop social policies that guarantee gradual improvements in people's living standards, particularly for the most vulnerable. In order to achieve its programme's goals, the Government will support the expansion and modernization of the financial system, while keeping inflation under control, in an effort to improve the legal framework necessary for economic development.

With regard to our close cooperation with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, we are determined to promote sound macroeconomic and investment policies that will guide the country towards sustainable development, encourage the private sector and promote employment.

I would also like to assure the Assembly that our Government is fully committed to implementing the Millennium Development Goals. We share the belief that coordinating and harmonizing national and local development strategies, with wide-scale civil society participation, private sector initiative, heightened public awareness and the holding of public debates to identify the most effective ways and means to achieve the Millennium Development Goals will lead to the desired results, including in Albania.

The Albanian Government is resolved to combat organized crime, transnational crime, illegal trafficking and terrorism relentlessly by strengthening national legislation and law enforcement structures and by establishing relevant implementation mechanisms and fully committing itself to regional cooperation on a wider scale. That effort will serve to bring us closer to our friendly neighbours as well as to all European countries. This is a common struggle.

It should be recalled that my country has had excellent experience in coexistence among different religious communities. We are convinced that strengthening dialogue among cultures, civilizations and religions is an important element in strengthening peaceful coexistence and good-neighbourly relations. It also holds great potential for strengthening cooperation among countries. In that connection, an international forum was held in Tirana in December 2004 under the auspices of the President of Albania and the Director-General of UNESCO. In addition to discussing important issues related to such a dialogue, the gathering also paved the way for further cooperation in that regard.

My country has decisively committed itself to the path to Euro-Atlantic integration, with the clear purpose of joining the European Union and NATO. We view Euro-Atlantic integration as our country's entry into the zone of peace, stability and prosperity established in Western Europe over the course of many years. Joining that family will signal our society's embrace of such values as economic and political freedom, fundamental human rights and freedoms, the primacy of law, social prosperity and solidarity. It will also reflect that fact that we are making our contribution to that set of values.

Albania is preparing for the closure of negotiations of the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the European Union that will lead to its signature. We are convinced that our country has the ability to meet all the requirements of this very rigorous process. Albanian society is firmly committed to carry out reform, which will contribute to our integration into the European Union. We believe that the reform process is, first and foremost, in the interest of the country and of strengthening the economy and improving Albania's image in the world.

We view NATO as a guarantor of security in our region. By increasing cooperation with NATO we are aiming at membership soon. Albania's participation in NATO peacekeeping operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Afghanistan constitutes a real contribution to both regional and international peace and security.

Good-neighbourly relations and cooperation with the countries of our region continue to be top priorities of our foreign policy. Our vision for a region of stability and security, through fruitful bilateral and multilateral cooperation, is sincere and is already quite clear. Our philosophy regarding the development of such relations is based on three basic principles: transparency, tolerance and dialogue. In that context, we have intensified high-level political dialogue with all the countries of the region. We have expanded the framework for legal and institutional cooperation at the bilateral and multilateral levels in many areas of common interest. That dialogue is becoming more

constant and sensible due to a spirit of mutual understanding and confidence.

Through their growing participation in peacekeeping missions in areas of conflict throughout the world, several countries of the region have been transformed from consumers to worthy contributors to the maintenance of international peace and security.

With regard to positive developments and progress in the region, Albania has consistently played a positive, moderating and constructive role vis-à-vis Albania's neighbouring countries by promoting multi-ethnic coexistence in an atmosphere of harmony and lasting peace. Albanian foreign policy holds that determining the status of Kosovo is an important issue. There is no more time to lose. The status quo will not guarantee lasting peace in the region. We believe that the answer to Kosovo's status should take into account the will of its people as democratically expressed and not disregard the rights of minorities. In that regard, conditional independence could allow the international community to monitor the development of Kosovo's institutions and society for a given period and, above all, would provide a guarantee for Serbs and other minorities to live in their own homes in that country. We all believe that Kosovo's future, as for all the countries in the region, lies in European and Euro-Atlantic integration.

We Albanians are confident that, in his forthcoming report, Mr. Kai Aide, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Kosovo, will provide an objective assessment of the standards achieved thus far in Kosovo in connection with the establishment of the institutions for the rule of law and a democratic environment that will open the way for negotiations on Kosovo's final status. The Contact Group on Kosovo has an important role to play in that process.

In short, there have been some preliminary positive results. But there is much work to be done by us all to encourage and sustain the dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade. There are many issues to discuss. With good will and the determination to achieve peace, we have much cause to optimistic.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency the Honourable Abdulkader Shareef, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the United Republic of Tanzania.

Mr. Shareef (United Republic of Tanzania): On behalf of the United Republic of Tanzania, I congratulate the President on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixtieth session. I wish him every success. I would also like to extend my delegation's gratitude to his predecessor, Mr. Jean Ping, for presiding over the Assembly's fifty-ninth session, which, among other accomplishments, successfully negotiated the outcome document of the High-level Plenary Meeting.

At the outset, I should like to commend Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his outstanding and tenacious leadership of the United Nations through one of the most trying interludes in the Organization's history. That period has probably been the most creative and visionary in the Secretary-General's career, as he inspired the Organization and its membership to embark upon ambitious and much-needed reforms to make the Organization relevant and equal to the threats and challenges of a globalizing world in the twenty-first century.

The summit that has just ended set the tone, agenda and direction for where the United Nations should go 60 years after its inception at San Francisco in 1945. The pace of reform will be determined by the collective political dedication of us, the Members of the Organization. The process of United Nations reform has brought us together and reaffirmed the sovereign equality of nations and demonstrated the indispensability of collective action and the demands of shared responsibility and obligations in international affairs. Although what we have agreed upon falls short of what we set out to accomplish, we have to put details into what we need to implement with the same spirit of collective dedication and a sense of common purpose. We should not allow political expediency and posturing to rob us of our declared objectives.

The glaring indignities of poverty, hunger, illiteracy and preventable disease amidst the glamour and opulence of prosperity in some quarters of the world should be relegated to the dustbin of history. That is achievable if we implement the commitments that we resolved to undertake at the summit that has just ended. At Monterrey we agreed on a framework for partnership. For some members of the G-8, Gleneagles transformed a 30-year-old pledge to devote 0.7 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) to official development assistance into a timetable; for others, it resulted in predictable increases. Debt

sustainability has finally given way to debt cancellation for some countries, including my own, the United Republic of Tanzania. That is a tremendous relief and will make a significant quantitative and qualitative difference to our development programmes and priorities.

Trade and investment have also received acceptance as being central to growth and development. The Doha trade and development round of negotiations, to take place in Hong Kong later this year, should be completed with agreements on pending issues such as subsidies.

The political capital generated at the summit should bring about a convergence of resources from our development partners and the economic, political, fiscal and institutional reforms already under way in Africa, and result in predictable and implementable development programmes. The issue of absorptive capacity should not arise when there is coherence and coordination among our partners within a collaborative framework at country level to mainstream assistance into national development strategies and priorities.

The United Republic of Tanzania has already complied with the critical element of paragraph 22 (a) of the 2005 World Summit Outcome (resolution 60/1), which calls upon developing countries to adopt and implement comprehensive national strategies to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). We are ahead in achieving the goal regarding universal primary education, namely, nine years before the 2015 deadline. We are on-course in achieving the goals regarding access to safe drinking water, reducing child mortality and promoting gender equality in political participation and decision-making structures. With steady assistance and our macroeconomic and political stability, we should get closer to achieving most of the Goals by 2015.

In sub-Saharan Africa individual countries are accelerating reforms and improving the climate for investment. Frontloading aid flows and innovative new sources of finance to bridge the financial gap in achieving the MDGs should be scaled up, as should aid-in-trade to overcome supply side constraints. Subsidies and market-access issues should also be addressed simultaneously in the international development agenda. The outcome of the Helsinki process, with its wealth of ideas, adds tremendous value both to the reform process launched last week and to the overall international development agenda. It addresses political deficits and requirements to bring about purposeful development and democratic changes in this era of globalization.

The relationship between development and security at the national and international levels has clearly emerged during the debate and negotiations on the 2005 World Summit Outcome, on which I do not need to dwell here. The arms race in conventional and nuclear weapons can only bring the world to apocalyptic brinkmanship — by design or by accident. The agonizing endeavour to mobilize development efforts to achieve the MDGs stands in stark contrast to the irony of spending trillions of dollars on armaments of total and mass destruction. It is therefore most disconcerting that the summit was unable to come up with an agreement on disarmament and non-proliferation. We should not give up on the subject of disarmament and non-proliferation. Let us therefore make another effort to resume negotiations on those issues.

We in Tanzania and in our region are also particularly keen to see a global convention concluded soon to regulate the marking and tracing of all small arms and light weapons and on the illicit brokering of arms which fuel violent conflicts and instability in our regions in Africa.

Collective security cannot be enhanced without reform of the Security Council. The reform of the Security Council too has been deferred, but the issue of the Council's expansion and the reform of its working methods should remain on the agenda. Negotiations on the issue should resume soon. The United Republic of Tanzania supports the Ezulwini consensus on the reform of the Security Council, bearing in mind that only Africa has yet to have either a permanent seat or a veto in the Council. Our interlocutors should recognize that imbalance in our negotiations and should try to accommodate Africa's demands to make the Security Council more, not less, representative and more, not less, legitimate.

The condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations brings us closer to an agreed definition, which would be helpful in galvanizing our undivided efforts to combat terrorism. The lack of an agreed definition, however, should not delay an agreement on a comprehensive anti-terrorism convention in the course of this session of the General

Assembly. As a victim of terrorism in recent years, the United Republic of Tanzania has a compelling reason to support a global anti-terrorist strategy.

Respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all people is entrenched in the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and buttressed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. For nearly 60 years, the institutional expression and status of human rights in the United Nations has been evolving, and it still is. We support the establishment of the Human Rights Council to the extent that it will elevate the centrality of human rights, enhance the moral authority and integrity of the United Nations, and overcome the shortcomings of the current Commission on Human Rights. The new Council should embody the principles and practices of peer review in its working methods to avoid double standards in accountability and compliance, which have plagued the Human Rights Commission.

The new concept of the "responsibility to protect" merits our support, after the recent international failures to protect people in Rwanda and Bosnia. The responsibility to protect should be a collective undertaking by States to protect populations from genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. However, we will need to establish benchmarks and safeguards to guarantee against unilateral and politically motivated interventions, such as those experienced in the past with what were conceived and presented as humanitarian intervention.

The African continent is the main scene of both looming and several ongoing natural and human-made disasters. Some are forgotten and protracted, while others gain initial media attention but receive delayed, and often inadequate, responses. We support the recommendations in the outcome document for new standby arrangements and funding for emergencies in Africa.

There is an international regime in place to provide protection and assistance to refugees fleeing for their lives from persecution, violence and gross violations of human rights. The United Republic of Tanzania has received and protected such victims since we became independent, in 1961. Currently, Tanzania is still hosting over half a million refugees. We are gratified and encouraged by the commitment in the outcome document to safeguard the institution of asylum and by its reaffirmation of the principle of solidarity and burden-sharing in assisting refugee populations and their host communities. We equally hope that the recognition of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement will provide more effective protection for internally displaced persons by relevant and appropriate authorities.

The outcome document has duly recognized the tragedy of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the malaria and the tuberculosis that have hit Africa so hard. That global awareness should be matched by adequate funding to save current and succeeding generations from the ravages of those diseases.

Tanzania would like to thank President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria for the statement he made, in his capacity as Chairman of the African Union, on the situation relating to conflicts, peace and security in Africa. We are grateful to him, to other African leaders and to the Chairman of the African Union Commission — His Excellency President Alpha Konare — as well as to all our friends outside Africa, for their dedicated efforts to prevent and resolve conflicts in Africa.

Last week, the Security Council adopted its resolution 1625 (2005), on strengthening the effectiveness of the Council's role in conflict prevention, particularly in Africa. Among other things, the resolution stresses the importance of averting conflicts to make possible peaceful development, security and stability in Africa. The resolution also calls for the strengthening of cooperation and communication between the United Nations and regional organizations such as the African Union in mediation efforts and peacekeeping.

The bulk of United Nations peacekeeping operations are in Africa, following peace agreements that are at various stages of implementation. Despite serious numerical, logistical, financial and sometimes image constraints, multidimensional peacekeeping operations are making positive contributions to restoring peace in Africa in collaboration with the African Union and other friends of Africa. Political and operational partnerships between the United Nations and the African Union need to be strengthened and institutionalized.

We welcome the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in the Sudan in partnership with the United Nations. We encourage progress in the current peace negotiations on Darfur.

The institutional and operational requirement to bridge the transitional gap from peacekeeping to development, in the form of a Peacebuilding Commission, is one of the main decisions to have been taken in the current reform of the United Nations. Africa needs the Commission. It should become operational as soon as possible. The peaceful outcomes in Burundi and Somalia — and, soon, in Sierra Leone and Liberia — require a peacebuilding mechanism during the transition from peacekeeping to reconstruction and development. The peace processes in both Burundi and Somalia have had tortuous paths, but those countries finally have peace agreements and transitional Governments in place. The Peacebuilding Commission should focus priority attention on both Burundi and Somalia. The second summit on the Great Lakes region, to be held later this year in Nairobi, will pave the way for a peace and security pact and for peacebuilding initiatives in the region.

The only remaining case of self-determination in Africa is Western Sahara. We appeal for maximum cooperation by the parties concerned and for unrelenting support for the issue from the international community through the Baker plan. It is in the interest of all of us here to reach a peaceful solution to that problem.

I cannot conclude my statement without addressing the situation in the Middle East, and in particular the question of Palestine, which remains of great concern to my Government. There have been path-breaking developments in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to revive the road map and invigorate the initiatives of the Quartet. The new leadership of Mr. Mahmoud Abbas at the Palestinian Authority, the withdrawal of Israel from the Gaza Strip and the coming elections in the occupied territories are injecting new dynamism and a positive direction into the peace process. But we must accept the reality that the people of Palestine have equal rights, not only to live in peace and security in full human dignity but also to establish their own independent State, coexisting side by side with the State of Israel. We should therefore do all we can to help secure the just and lasting peace that is the right of the Palestinian, Israeli and Arab peoples.

Finally, I want to reiterate our deepest sympathies and condolences to the victims, the Government and the people of the United States of America in the wake of the death and destruction wreaked by Hurricane Katrina.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting.

Several representatives have requested to be permitted to speak in exercise of their right of reply. May I remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Mavroyiannis (Cyprus): I wish to reply to the statement made this morning by Mr. Abdullah Güll, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Turkey. Without examining Mr. Güll's assessment of recent developments with regard to the Cyprus problem, with which we entirely disagree, and without entering into polemics, I would like briefly to make the following points.

First, there are not two peoples in Cyprus. All people on Cyprus, regardless of their ethnic or religious origins, make up the Cypriot people.

Secondly, there is no such thing as the "Greek Cypriot administration". One would have thought that speakers addressing the General Assembly could at least conform to the provisions of the Charter and the resolutions of the Organization, and refrain from insulting its general membership by pretending that the Republic of Cyprus, the only recognized State on the island, does not exist.

Thirdly, references to unfair restrictions imposed upon Turkish Cypriots, as Turkey has chosen to label them, are profoundly misguided. I believe there is no need for me to explain that international legal norms safeguard the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States and could not possibly condone the separatists attempts in the occupied part of Cyprus in breach of Security Council resolutions.

Fourthly, and lastly, the Turkish accusation that the Government of Cyprus is attempting to refer the Cyprus issue to other forums is completely inconsistent with reality. We maintain that there is no alternative to the United Nations context for seeking a solution to the Cyprus problem, but we cannot accept Turkey's attempts to evade fulfilling its obligations within the European Union framework by using as a pretext the

ongoing efforts to solve the Cyprus problem at the United Nations.

Mr. Kitchen (Zimbabwe): The Foreign Minister of the Czech Republic today made a careless and unsubstantiated allegation: that my country is one of those that have repeatedly failed to respond to human rights concerns of the international community. We do not know what concerns he was talking about. The Minister has obviously allowed himself to be misinformed about Zimbabwe. We hope his delegation will find the courage to check its information with an open an unbiased mind. However, we have an idea about what the Minister meant by the "international community". We know that his country is eager to impress the particular international community he was talking about. However, my delegation would appreciate it if the Czech Republic refrained from using the name of Zimbabwe in pursuit of its objectives.

Mr. Udovicki (Serbia and Montenegro): I would like to reply to the statement made by Mr. Besnik Mustafaj, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Albania.

We are surprised that Albania has changed its policy and that it is advocating the independence of Kosovo and Metohija. That demand prejudges the future status of Kosovo and Metohija before talks on that issue have even started.

It does not contribute to the much-needed cooperation between Belgrade and Tirana or to stability in the region. We would like recall that Kosovo and Metohija is a part of Serbia and that talks on the future status of the province will be conducted between Belgrade, Pristina and the international community, within which there is wide consensus.

Mr. Cumberbach Miguén (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): An old comic tells the story of a rabbit that, protected by hunters, was able to tame lions. Then one day, confronted by one of the great felines without his usual protectors, he was devoured on the spot. Apparently, the regime misgoverning the Czech Republic is now, with regard to Cuba, playing the role of that rabbit, sheltered by a powerful guardian. It apparently is unaware of the fact that, for some 47 years now, the Cuban revolution has been resisting the onslaughts of the greatest Power of this world, which has attempted to undermine Cuba in every way possible. And yet, what can one expect from satraps, lackeys and boot-lickers?

Following instructions given thousands of miles away in Prague, just to the north of our island, the Czech delegation sits here in judgement of others with respect to human rights. We look forward to hearing about the immaculate record of human rights protection and promotion in that country.

We suppose that it has magically stemmed the rise of xenophobia and fascist discrimination that has been practised in the Czech Republic since the Second World War against the Romas minority. We would also imagine that the supreme moralists and protectors of the Czech Republic have managed to reverse the spectacular upsurge in prostitution and violence against women and children associated with that terrible era. In such an unassailable position, the Czech Republic must now be free of the mafia that has corrupted its every institution and controls every shady dealing imaginable, from drugs and weapons to financial crime. In a perfect society like that of the Czech Republic, it was surprising to hear of the recent resignation of the Prime Minister under allegations of embezzlement of public funds.

The Commission on Human Rights needs to be rebuilt in order to put an end to the pathetic circus shows played out every year by delegations such as that of the Czech Republic — pitifully, compared to the true artists of the genre — in the conference rooms of United Nations headquarters in Geneva. If such miserable spectacles pass for cooperation with the human rights machinery of the Organization, to which the Czech representative referred with such dramatic hypocrisy this morning, Cuba wants nothing to do with it. The same holds true if we are expected to put up with the tall stories retailed by the United States in the Commission's work as it blackmails and bullies half the world.

Allow us to recall that the Czech Republic remained shockingly and resoundingly silent when the Commission debated the scandalous cases of torture and violence inflicted on prisoners at the illegal naval base of Guantánamo. If the human rights council to be established repeats the falsehoods, double standards, politicization and selectivity of view that the Western Powers and their political satellites have imposed on the Commission for years, we can announce its superannuation here and now.

Given its own situation, the Czech Republic, rather than dancing badly to someone else's music, would do better to strive to win international respect by addressing the serious political, social and economic problems within its own borders.

Ms. Dolakova (Czech Republic): Let me briefly comment on what the representatives of Zimbabwe and Cuba have just said in reply to the address of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic this morning.

My delegation would like to express its regret that the mere statement of the obvious facts on the lack of cooperation of certain countries, including Cuba and Zimbabwe, with the Commission on Human Rights could cause such strong responses. We could also interpret that overreaction as a sign of nervousness and bad conscience.

We sincerely hope that the cooperation of those countries with the Commission will soon improve, and we are ready to discuss those issues at relevant international forums, including the future human rights council. At the same time, we will not shy away from discussing openly, constructively and fully any matter of substance related to the alleged violations of human rights in my country.

Mr. Mustafaj (Albania) (*spoke in French*): Frankly, I was not expecting such a swift reaction from my friends in Belgrade. I would like to clarify that Albania has not and will not intervene in any way in the future of Kosovo, but that since Kosovo is our nearest neighbour, we cannot remain indifferent, particularly as we prepare for the launching of negotiations on the future and final status of that country.

We must not forget that we are paying such particular attention to the region's future because any instability there is fraught with consequences for my country. It will be recalled that there was a humanitarian disaster there six years ago, and my country suffered its consequences. More than 1 million innocent Kosovars sought refuge in Albania, a country with very limited resources for sheltering so many people. My country also suffered the consequences of the war. We do not wish to see that repeated.

So long as the international community remains committed to and involved in debating the future of Kosovo, it is perfectly natural and sincere to express our thoughts about its future. It is not we, however, who will decide. There are concrete factors, the institutions and people of Kosovo, and international agencies present there, and they will determine the province's future.

Secondly, I find it very old-fashioned to suggest that the fact that we are still talking about the future of Kosovo could in some way hamper relations between Tirana and Belgrade. Albania and Serbia and Montenegro are independent countries. No third-party issues, such as those of Kosovo, can determine relations and exchanges between our two countries. We are resolved to develop good economic, cultural and political relations because they help to bring our countries closer together and serve stability and friendship in the region. One cannot base dialogue on blackmail. That is not normal.

Mr. Cumberbach Miguén (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation deeply regrets the fact that the delegation of the Czech Republic persists in its false accusations.

With regard to cooperation with United Nations human rights mechanisms, our country, as is well documented, has always cooperated with all those thematic mechanisms of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights that have not been subject to double standards or politicization. On a number of occasions, we have welcomed representatives of the Office to our territory, including the very first High Commissioner in 1993.

As to the concerns attributed to my delegation by the delegation of the Czech Republic, I would recall — in case Prague has been struck with amnesia — that the Czech Republic has over the course of the years been involved in numerous schemes to discredit the achievements of the Cuban people. It is no coincidence that it has served as a docile mouthpiece to the United States in its attempts to undermine Cuba in the Commission, organizing conferences and meetings at United Nations headquarters in Geneva and in Prague in recent years on the so-called human rights situation in Cuba, with the participation and full cooperation of the cream of the far-right Cuban terrorists from Miami and well-known genocidal democrats from other parts of the world.

It was only to be expected that, true to form, the Government of the Czech Republic would vociferously support the establishment by the United States of the

so-called Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba. It even sent its ambassador to Washington, D.C., for the appointment of the coordinator for transition in Cuba — a kind of proconsulate appointed by the Empire to enact its political ambitions and wild dreams for our country. The Czech Government is little more than an accomplice and sponsor of the terrorism waged against Cuba and its people, and has played an active role in the cruel economic blockade of our country.

Its attitude should therefore be judged and condemned by the international community. It is they, and not us, who should be nervous and guilt-ridden. Our delegation reserves the right to revisit this issue. In the meantime, and to the displeasure of the Czech Republic, our people, under the leadership of its party and freely elected Government, will not allow its revolution and achievements to be trampled underfoot by mercenaries and terrorists in the pay of a foreign Power that the Government of the Czech Republic has the sad and dirty task to support.

Mr. Kitchen (Zimbabwe): My delegation, in its last intervention, invited the delegation of the Czech Republic to look at the issues with an open mind. It is clear from the response we have just received that it is not prepared to do so. That is understandable, but also regrettable.

The meeting rose at 7.25 p.m.

United Nations A/60/PV.20

General Assembly

Sixtieth session

Official Records

20th plenary meeting
Thursday, 22 September 2005, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Eliasson ..... (Sweden)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 p.m.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency The Honourable Denzil Douglas, Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Planning and National Security of Saint Kitts and Nevis.

Mr. Douglas (Saint Kitts and Nevis): My Government supports the report of the Secretary-General, which reaffirms development, peace, security and human rights as fundamental to the well-being of any modern State. The Government of Saint Kitts and Nevis steadfastly contends that there is an inherent link between poverty reduction, the promotion of human rights, economic development, security and good governance.

Regrettably, the tendency has been to separate them, in favour of what some call political imperatives. I daresay policies do not and cannot exist in a vacuum. Politics is about people, and therefore national, regional or even international organizational policies must be about people. There is stark evidence of this.

The political landscape reveals clear indications of the interconnectedness of the phenomena of poverty eradication, security, economic development and governance. The task of governance is becoming increasingly difficult in the face of growing unemployment, deepening poverty, escalating energy prices and a mounting cost of living. As a consequence, we have witnessed social dislocations and civil disquiet. The fruits of globalization still do not grow among the world's poorest, who have become further marginalized and blame their Governments, which, despite their best efforts, are often relegated to the margins of political discourse and economic activities.

Some citizens have become more vocal and more open in their distrust of Government policies that fail to deliver the promises of democracy and globalization, fail to reduce poverty and unemployment and fail to improve their standard of living. The economic and political rift between rich and poor nations is steadily becoming a deeper divide as mistrust continues to characterize relations between the developed and the developing countries.

Understandably, small countries — despite limited and diminishing resources — are expected to participate equally in the fight against the social scourges that confront us. But that dramatically reduces our ability to make new and necessary investments in socio-economic development. It is within that context that we urge Member nations to substantively support the Millennium Development Goals. We also urge them to partner with us, recognizing our vulnerabilities to natural disasters and other external economic factors, and recognizing the need for preferred and differential treatment in trade and access to markets in developed countries. We urge developed countries to implement policies that do not

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undermine our efforts or reverse the gains that we in small developing countries have made. We call for equity and for a willingness to live and let live.

Despite overwhelming odds, however, the Government of Saint Kitts and Nevis stands ready to do its share. At the base of our efforts and policies is the fundamental importance of strengthening the rights of the child. We believe that promoting the rights of the child goes to the heart of full and effective protection of human rights. We also firmly believe that by making sure every child in Saint Kitts and Nevis has access to primary and secondary education, to potable water and to health care, we are creating healthier, better adjusted and productive adults whose rights will have been nourished and enshrined in the policy orientation and development agenda of our proud country.

It is generally accepted that the right to development is also a fundamental right that national Governments have a primary responsibility to ensure. Long before the Millennium Development Goals were formally elaborated and adopted by the community of nations, that fundamental right was emphatically understood by the Government and the people of Saint Kitts and Nevis. As a point of reference, in this year's *Human Development Report* issued by the United Nations Development Programme, Saint Kitts and Nevis was ranked 49 out of 177 countries on the Human Development Index — the second-highest ranking in the Caribbean region and, indeed, among the highest in the Latin American and Caribbean region. The report reflects the reality in Saint Kitts and Nevis, where there is an adult literacy rate of 97.8 per cent, a life expectancy rate of 70 years — which needs upward revision — and a combined primary, secondary and tertiary school enrolment ratio of 89 per cent. The report underscores our commitment to gender equality, starting with current parity in enrolment levels among girls and boys in school at both the primary and the secondary levels. The report also confirms 98 per cent access to safe water and sanitation. In the field of health, it notes a 99 per cent rate of immunization of infants against tuberculosis and measles in Saint Kitts and Nevis.

The Pan-Caribbean Partnership to combat HIV/AIDS (PANCAP), established by the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), has proved to be a useful and pragmatic vehicle for collective action and results. In Saint Kitts and Nevis, our own fight against HIV/AIDS uses that particular model. PANCAP has distinguished itself and has been identified as a best-practice model. We are therefore now pursuing policies aimed at universal access to treatment and care and at ending discrimination and the stigmatization of those persons affected by HIV/AIDS, while at the same time continuing our public education initiatives on preventing the spread of the virus.

A per capita income of more than $7,000 places us squarely among upper-middle-income countries. We thank the United Nations for recognizing our efforts, which are the result of policies engineered to ensure the development of the individual despite the obstacles that we face as a small economy. They also reflect the commitment of my Government to ensuring the protection of the rights of our children and their role in our country's future.

That, however, is only one side of the coin. The achievements to which I referred come at an enormous cost — a cost that represents an enormous burden — to our people. The past decade has been particularly difficult for Saint Kitts and Nevis. Our small island State continues to be especially vulnerable to natural disasters, external economic fluctuations and policies biased against small economies such as ours. My country has experienced back-to-back hurricanes, landslides and floods, at a cost of more than half a billion dollars. We have been forced to direct more and more of our scarce resources towards recovery and away from development.

The experience throughout the Caribbean region is very similar. It was just in July this year that our sister CARICOM nation of Grenada again suffered serious devastation, caused by Hurricane Emily, on the back of last year's devastation brought by Hurricane Ivan. The Maldives, another small island sister nation, has made pleas for a delay in the process set in motion for its graduation from the list of least developed countries, owing to the tsunami. We specifically support the Maldives' request.

In addition to the cost of recovery, escalating high prices and the cost of food imports, Saint Kitts and Nevis, as an emerging tourist destination, has faced the prohibitively high cost of implementing supplementary security measures since 11 September 2001. To further compound that grave situation, the recent rulings of the World Trade Organization relative to trade preferences have dealt a most significant blow

to small economies in the Caribbean and therefore threaten to unravel their economic base.

In the case of my country, after centuries of sugar production and sales to the European market — which have been a cornerstone of our economic support and our social stability — we have been forced to close that industry, which finally succumbed to continuous losses and escalating debts. Saint Kitts and Nevis can no longer compete profitably in a world market that is characterized by engineered low prices for sugar and by the unfair trading practices of some countries. That has severe implications in terms of unemployment, social dislocation, psychological distress and the dramatic loss of urgently needed foreign-exchange earnings.

We have tried to prepare for such an eventuality through a process of economic diversification, but support from the international community has not been forthcoming. The cost of borrowing, the removal of grant financing from the menus of international financial institutions and the annual recovery costs from catastrophic hurricanes have become more and more onerous. Creative legal policy initiatives, especially in the international financial services sector, have been challenged and undermined by some developed countries.

In an attempt to fulfil the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, my Government has also pursued policies to stimulate and facilitate private-sector-led growth by investing in physical infrastructure and human resource development. But we need international political and economic support.

The Secretary-General underscored that threats to peace and security represent different things to different countries. If we intend to promote collective security, there must be an appreciation of and sensitivity to this diversity among countries. In the same way, we are called upon to aid in the fight against terrorism, drug trafficking, transnational organized crime and other scourges that threaten international peace and security in the more advanced countries. It is not unreasonable, therefore, to expect reciprocity of support in fighting the almost intractable problems that confront small States. To address these urgent challenges, we call on the international community to support and contribute to the full, timely and effective implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for further implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, which we consider a very important mechanism for achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

My Government was heartened by the Secretary-General's proposal for the establishment of a Human Rights Council. We also support effective change in the United Nations, which also means that the Security Council must evolve to reflect current world realities. The United Nations must also play a more enhanced role in development, and the concerns of small island developing States must be given greater attention within this Organization. Small States can offer best-practice models and creative ideas from which the international debate on development, peace, security and human rights could benefit.

We encourage greater transparency in the deliberations of critical organs of the Organization and greater opportunities for small States to be represented in the decision-making processes of these organs.

The people of Taiwan continue to be excluded from the brotherhood of nations, which was created to represent the hopes and aspirations of all peoples. My Government reiterates its call for the people of the Republic of China, Taiwan, to be consulted, effectively represented and invited to participate in the critical debates on world peace, human security, development and human rights. I believe that we would have failed to promote human rights effectively if, through political exclusion, generations of people are relegated to the margins of such important issues and the forums that facilitate their discussion.

I remain cautiously optimistic about the future. On the one hand, Governments have rededicated themselves to the struggle to build a world free from want and fear and with the freedom to live with dignity. In addition, we are poised to reform the United Nations in the hope that it can play a more effective role in this ever-changing world.

However, the tenor of last week's summit suggests a strong possibility that some developed countries may yet renege on those commitments, which could further erode developing countries' efforts to eradicate extreme poverty, generate employment, promote human security and narrow the development gap between richer and poorer countries.

We still have an opportunity for an enhanced global partnership to turn commitments into action and

secure a future for our children, a future that is free from want of the basic necessities, free from fear of violence with guarantees of protection of the right to live in dignity. Only then will we build and reinforce the foundation of democracy, enhance collective security and jumpstart a process where globalization becomes a vehicle for change among all of the world's peoples.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency the Honourable Frederick A. Mitchell, Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Public Service of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas.

Mr. Mitchell (Bahamas): It is my honour to congratulate you on your election to the presidency of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly. I also wish to pay tribute to the tireless efforts of your predecessor, Mr. Jean Ping, for the manner in which he guided the work of the fifty-ninth session.

I wish to extend the condolences of the Right Honourable Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas, Perry Christie, and the Government and people of the Bahamas to the Government and people of the United States in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina last month. This is a scene with which the people of the Bahamas are regrettably all too familiar, and we continue to offer our assistance and support in any way possible.

The High-level Plenary Meeting held last week, at which so many heads of State and Government were represented, served as a timely and much-needed reminder of the need for us all to recommit ourselves to the purposes and principles of this Organization. At a time when some have begun to question the purpose of this Organization, the Bahamas reaffirms that the United Nations remains the best chance for all States, large and small, to achieve peace, security and sustainable development for our peoples.

One of the leaders who spoke last week was the Most Honourable P. J. Patterson, Prime Minister of Jamaica. On April of 2006, Mr. Patterson demits office after more than a decade in the service of his people and the Caribbean region as Prime Minister, and a generation as a parliamentarian and Government Minister. His statement last week was perhaps his final statement to this Assembly as Prime Minister. The Bahamas — and the region joins us, I am sure — salutes Mr. Patterson as he retires from active public life.

Mr. Patterson's example in Jamaica is one that we know well enough in the Caribbean region. It is the example of democratic governance and the traditions of regular elections and accountability to the publics whom we serve. The history of democracy in our region has also produced for the region an enviable standard of living in many ways. This way of life has been described by the Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, The Honourable Ralph Gonsalves, as the "Caribbean civilization" — one that did not develop without significant investment in our people and that cannot be sustained unless that investment continues.

The region is neither poor nor rich. It falls in between, having accomplished most if not all of the Millennium Development Goals. But as we watch the development of globalization, there is a tendency to forget that this region of relatively few people and small nations requires the continued support of the developed world. Nowhere is this more evident than in the decisions taken on sugar and bananas. There is a symbiotic relationship between the region and the developed world, with many of our people leaving the region to help to sustain the way of life of the developed world. There is a major transformation right now in economies throughout the region.

Our view is that greater attention from our developed partners must therefore be paid to that region in transition, looking towards investment, particularly in education, support for the delivery of health care and continued support for democratic governance. It is not charity that is required, but a sound, sensible investment in our common future.

Haiti is our poorest member in the region and is perhaps the example from which it is best to draw lessons. We want to thank Brazil and the many sister countries of Latin America that have risen to the challenge with men and materiel. But while much has been given, there are many pledges of donor aid that have not materialized as they should. It is a complaint throughout the developing world that donors make pledges of financial and material support but do not follow through on those pledges.

Haiti today is paying the price in a real way for having charted the way towards freedom in this hemisphere when, in 1804, it struck a blow for the freedom of Africans in the West. Today, we repeat what the American Christian Bishop, T. D. Jakes, said

in the National Cathedral in Washington last week when praying for the victims of Hurricane Katrina: it is what we do that counts, but what we say we will do.

Haiti is of major interest to us in the Bahamas, because, given the circumstances of its economy and its national politics, the Bahamas and the region are facing increased pressure from illegal migration from Haiti and the threat of instability. It is incumbent upon all of us in the United Nations to do all that we can to help resolve the issues in Haiti.

It is also important that we not overlook issues of global governance and institutional reform. It would be nearly impossible for small States, in particular, to sustain meaningful gains from the process of globalization without a voice and without participation in international decision-making and norm-setting bodies. It is for that reason that the Bahamas is encouraged by the discussions that took place during the high-level dialogue on financing for development, held earlier this year, which confirmed that there is a place for the United Nations in all aspects of global standard-setting and assessment. The dialogue clearly demonstrated that there is a need to address the democratic deficit in many of the international economic, financial and trade institutions.

From this rostrum last year, the Bahamas called for the convening of a global forum to address the unfairness of unelected bodies imposing mandates that are unfunded upon developing economies like ours in the region, without our countries having an opportunity to be heard and to influence the result. We call once again for such a forum, and pledge that the Bahamas will continue to work towards levelling the playing field, particularly in the financial services sector.

The images of destruction in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina are all too familiar to many small island developing States. The images have been sobering, as we realize that even the biggest and strongest of us has to grapple with the difficulties associated with the recovery from such a destructive force of nature. Last year in this Hall, we said that the native peoples of our region were so familiar with the violent storms that plague the region in the summer months that they called them hurricanes. Today, we are seeing those storms hit with a savagery unknown in recent times. It leads us to question whether we are now being confronted by cyclical change or by climate change. Either case places front and centre the need for public policy on sustainable development and the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for small island developing States.

The Bahamas, much of whose land is barely five feet above mean sea level, wishes to highlight the need to undertake global action to address the problems of climate change. With the warming of the Earth's surfaces and oceans, we have seen an increase in the incidence of natural disasters, many of them causing untold loss and damage. We have an opportunity, however, to address the adverse effects of climate change. We have a chance to make a statement here during this session that we will not neglect our common but differentiated responsibility to protect our environment and to send this message to Montreal, where, in November this year, the Kyoto Protocol can finally begin to take on a more substantial form.

For countries such as the Bahamas, the threat of devastation as a result of natural disasters is exacerbated by man-made hazards. We once again reiterate our grave concern about the serious threat posed to the security and economic development of Caribbean countries by the trans-shipment of nuclear waste through the Caribbean Sea, and continue to call on States involved in such trans-shipments to desist from that practice. In this context, I wish to highlight the continuing efforts of the Caribbean region to designate the Caribbean Sea a special area in the context of sustainable development.

The achievement of sustainable development will require healthy, productive populations that are able both to contribute to and benefit from social and economic progress. The unrelenting spread of HIV/AIDS continues to threaten that progress in all countries, but particularly in the hardest hit developing countries. The Bahamas is a leader in the fight against HIV/AIDS in the Caribbean region, and has been recognized at the international level for the progress made in turning the tide against that disease in our country. We pay tribute to Dr. Perry Gomez, our lead physician in the fight against HIV/AIDS and, indeed, to my predecessor at this rostrum, Mr. Denzil Douglas from Saint Kitts and Nevis, as well as to all the other caregivers throughout the world. We welcome this body's reaffirmation at the highest levels of the fight against that disease.

In this context, the Bahamas looks forward to the high-level five-year review of the progress made in

implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, scheduled to take place in June 2006. At that time we must undertake an honest appraisal of what we have achieved and where we are failing short, and we must determine the way forward towards achieving the full implementation of the Declaration of Commitment.

In addition, the Bahamas has seen useful ideas advanced by the United States of America, the World Health Organization and the Pan American Health Organization, to prevent a bird flu pandemic. We would like to take this opportunity to alert the world that we must fight to stop such an eventuality, and pledge our support in doing so.

By virtue of its geographical location, the Bahamas is an unwitting transit point for illegal drugs from producing countries south of our borders to consumer countries to the north. We have consistently pointed out that the Bahamas does not produce such substances and is not the ultimate destination for them. That, however, does not stop the countries that consume the drugs from blaming countries like ours for the scourge. It is very unfair to do so. It is clear that consuming nations must increase their efforts to reduce demand within their borders. We continue to cooperate with the United States and other countries in that international fight. Our successful efforts and those of the broader region have been acknowledged by our international partners in the fight. I should like to mention in particular the admirable performance of the Bahamas in its counter-narcotics effort and the superb record of our country's police in terms of dismantling drug-trafficking organizations, as well as our hard work to improve the country's ability to combat money-laundering. It is a fight that we pledge to continue.

The Bahamas, like other transit countries, is experiencing the negative social impact of illegal activities associated with that trade. The deadly nexus between illicit drugs and small arms and light weapons and other criminal activities is undermining the economic and social fabric of our nation. We therefore welcome the conclusion in June of the work of the Open-ended Working Group on the marking and tracing of small arms and light weapons. The Bahamas, like many other countries, would have strongly preferred to reach agreement on legally binding commitments on the marking and tracing of such weapons. Nonetheless, we hope that this tool will provide some of the necessary political will and momentum to make real progress in halting the illicit accumulation and spread of small arms and light weapons. We also look forward to adopting concrete commitments in the near future to regulate the activities of brokers of small arms and light weapons. In addition, the Bahamas continues to call on developed countries to take the same extraordinary measures they use in seeking to stop the trafficking of drugs into their countries to stop illegal arms from reaching our shores from their countries.

The Bahamas is pleased to note the adoption by the General Assembly on 13 April 2005 of the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism. We hope to be in a position to sign the Convention in the near future. We are resolute in the fight against the attacks on innocent people going about their daily lives by those pursuing dubious and nefarious political ends. The vicious attacks in London and Sharm el-Sheikh this year demonstrate clearly the urgency of our task.

However, we must also remember that the fight against those who would attack our common civilization can never be used as an excuse to curtail the rights and freedoms of our citizens, and we must ensure that all counter-measures must conform to both the letter and the spirit of international human rights law. If we lose our common humanity in the process, the other side will win. We must also ensure that a spirit of cooperation and assistance permeates our international cooperation efforts on this issue, as we unite to fight a common enemy.

Over the past year, various issues related to the management of United Nations programmes and funds have been highlighted in the world media. Our Organization has been plagued by allegations of corruption and abuse. Therefore, during the months leading up to the present session, the Bahamas welcomed the opportunity to engage constructively in consultations to ensure a successful outcome on the question of management reform of the Organization. We reaffirm our support for the Secretary-General with respect to the bold measures that he promised in his report entitled "In larger freedom" (A/59/2005), and we believe that he should be given the necessary level of authority and flexibility to fulfil his function as our chief executive officer. However, that is not to say that we support those proposals from other quarters that would seek to transfer power from the General

Assembly to the Secretary-General in matters such as the redeployment of resources. The General Assembly is and should remain the principal policy organ of the United Nations, with absolute powers in the area of setting priorities. The Bahamas also looks forward to continuing discussions on the reform of the Security Council, particularly in relation to the Council's working methods.

Let me take this opportunity to thank Mr. Kofi Annan for his fine work in leading the United Nations through treacherous seas over the past years. We will shortly celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of the signing of the Charter of the United Nations. Looking back over the past 60 years, there is much of which we can justifiably be proud. There are some cases where we must accept that the international community failed to live up to its legal and moral obligation to act for the benefit of people in need. There are some cases where our decisions were dominated by big-Power pragmatism and doubtful legalisms, as opposed to moral certainty and philosophical clarity.

As we move forward, let us be sure that we learn from our mistakes as well as our successes. We have engaged in a process of reflection, which at times has been painful. Let us emerge from this stronger, more unified and determined to act to achieve the goals adopted 60 years ago to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom. The peoples of our nations demand and deserve nothing less. Now, more than ever, we need the United Nations.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. George Yeo, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Singapore.

Mr. Yeo (Singapore): A few weeks ago, a young Muslim lawyer in Singapore told me about a recent experience he had had in an East Asian airport. Unlike others holding Singaporean passports who were clearing immigration, he was told to stand aside. When he asked the reason, the immigration officer muttered that there were "too many Mohamads" that day. Smiling to himself, the Singaporean waited patiently and peered around, wondering how long he had to wait. The officer then warned him to stand still. He suddenly felt a chill along his spine.

Muslims all over the world are being profiled by security agencies. Since 11 September 2001, Muslims travelling to Western countries have been subject to all manner of interrogations and searches. Although the profiling is now done more subtly now, it continues. And in East Asia, profiling is increasing.

When sudden threats appear, perhaps it is natural to expect a certain overreaction from the affected communities. After Pearl Harbour, all Japanese people living in America became suspect, including those born there. Many were interned. By today's standards, that was an affront. But at that time, it was widely felt to be a necessary precaution. Shocked by that reaction, Japanese-American leaders set out to prove their Americanness, for example by forming the Japanese-American 100th Infantry Battalion, which fought heroically in the European theatre.

The travails of the Japanese-Americans were not unique. Tribalism is a basic human instinct. We may proclaim that all men are brothers, but we reflexively distinguish degrees of closeness. Divisions of race, language, culture and religion run deep in human society and emerge under stress. The ascendancy of the West in the past few centuries created tremendous stress in non-Western communities, upsetting all relationships and giving rise to a variety of responses, all of which sought to reconcile each community's sense of self with the needs of a Western-defined modernity. In Asia, for example, the re-emergence of China and India on the global stage has been a prolonged struggle of reconciling transformation with tradition.

That is the broader historical context against which the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims in the world must be viewed today. It is a subject that concerns us all deeply in the United Nations.

There are two evolving developments which feed on each other. The first is change within Islam itself; the other is the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims in different parts of the world. Both require our close attention.

The response of the Islamic world to the challenge of modernization will affect the development of the entire world in this century. In some ways, it is comparable to that of the Chinese response to modernization, and it will probably take much longer. The decline of the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century took place at about the same time as the decline of the Qing Dynasty in China. Both collapsed at the beginning of the twentieth century. After many

twists and turns, China has finally re-emerged onto the global stage with a bright future ahead of it.

There are about as many Muslims in the world as there are Chinese. In contrast to China, however, the Islamic world is unlikely to re-coalesce in the foreseeable future. Once Ataturk refused the caliphate and with iron determination started reforming Turkish institutions on the Western model, the Islamic world lost its centre. From then on, different Islamic societies experimented with different approaches and moved in different directions. It has been a mixed story.

The different responses of Muslim societies to the challenge of modernization are accompanied by a great ideological debate among political and religious leaders. Good governance has become a major issue, with calls for greater transparency and more democracy. In this debate, it is natural that some groups should look back to a romanticized period when the Islamic world was united and pristine and seek its re-establishment in the twenty-first century. Such were the ideas of the Muslim Brotherhood, which emanated from Egypt at the beginning of the twentieth century. The ideology of that movement continues to inspire Islamic groups in various parts of the world today. If only Muslims were to abide strictly by the teachings of Islam, there would be no corruption, Governments would be just and effective and Islamic societies would become strong again.

In many Islamic countries at various times, these groups have been suppressed for being subversive, and those who funded them were thought to have ulterior motives. This struggle for the soul of Islam is an ongoing process. However, it is not a struggle unique to Islam. For more than 200 years, Europe was bloodied by religious wars, which ended only with the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, which created the system of modern European States. But even then, there was still religious persecution, which led many Europeans to flee to the New World. In the twentieth century, the soul of Europe was torn by communism, fascism and anti-Semitism. It was precisely to overcome those divisions that the European Union was established by stages, creating the longest period of peace on that continent.

How Islamic society evolves in the coming decades is mainly for Muslims to decide. Generally speaking, non-Muslims would have no standing to participate in this debate but for two factors which have become critical and which have strategic importance for us all.

The first factor is the emergence of the ideology of Al-Qaida and its sister organizations, such as Al-Jama'a al-Islamiyah. This ideology is a malignant mutation of the ideas associated with the Muslim Brotherhood and other groups that argued for a return of Islamic society to an idealized past. It takes those ideas to an extreme and preaches hatred against non-Muslims worldwide, justifying violence against innocent bystanders even if they are Muslim. The suicide bomber has become a potent weapon in its armoury. The followers of this ideology will not hesitate to use weapons of mass destruction if they can get their hands on them. We have a duty in the United Nations to join in the global war against them.

The second factor necessitating the involvement of non-Muslims in the Islamic debate is the growing Muslim diaspora in many non-Islamic countries. As minority communities, Muslims living in countries like France and Germany, for example, have to accept certain limitations in the practice of their religion. With growing religiosity in recent years, issues like the wearing of the headscarf have surfaced. What constitutes a reasonable compromise varies from country to country. For example, Singapore allows aspects of sharia law to apply to Muslims, including Muslim men being allowed four wives, although only under stringent conditions. It would be hard for non-Muslims to accept this in Europe.

The fact is that while some human values are universal — and we should find more of them — many are not. We have to accept this diversity in the world. A greater tolerance of diversity in the world would create better conditions for peaceful cooperation between Muslims and non-Muslims and would influence the debate within Islam itself.

If non-Muslims tar all Muslims with the brush of terrorism and non-Muslim majority communities treat minority Muslim communities as problem communities, the future will be troubled for all of us. In such a climate, Muslim extremists will gain ascendancy, and the terrorists will find fertile ground for recruitment everywhere.

It is ridiculous to argue that terrorism is inherent in Islam. To do so is to play into the hands of the terrorists. That such views are increasingly being expressed in reputable journals and newspapers is

troubling. Of course one could find blood-curdling passages in the Koran and the Hadith, but these passages must be read in context. We find similar passages too in the Old Testament. As we would not, therefore, argue that terrorism is inherent in Judaism and Christianity, so we should not make Islam the problem. That would be a big mistake. There were periods in history when Islamic society was considerably more advanced than Western society.

Equally, it would be a big mistake for Muslim leaders to allow Muslim extremists to make claims on behalf of Muslims worldwide without contest. This causes non-Muslims to suspect that Muslims are generally in sympathy with them. To be sure, there are genuine grievances that have to be addressed, like Palestine, Chechnya and the future of Iraq, but these are issues that are more political than religious. The strategy of the extremists is to polarize Muslims and non-Muslims worldwide, thereby widening their base of support. Muslim leaders have to counter this strategy. It is also essential for them to reach out to non-Muslim audiences as well. The recent bombings in London led to a strong anti-Muslim backlash at the grass roots that threatened the fabric of British society. This in turn put pressure on Muslim leaders in the United Kingdom to condemn the terrorists in clear terms.

In the end, the fight against the terrorists has to be won within Muslim communities themselves. It is a battle for hearts and minds that requires Muslims to work together with non-Muslims against a common enemy.

We have to make a concerted effort to understand each other better. With globalization, all societies have become multiracial and multireligious to a greater or lesser extent. The pluralism we hold as an ideal in the United Nations is not a choice; it is a vital necessity.

In 1998, at its fifty-third session, the General Assembly declared in resolution 53/22 that 2001 would be the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. In 2001, at the fifty-sixth session, the General Assembly adopted the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations (resolution 56/6). And this year the United Nations sponsored numerous meetings on interfaith dialogue. A few months ago, the first Asia-Middle East Dialogue was held in Singapore to promote greater understanding between two important regions of the world.

We need to translate our declarations of principle into everyday language and into practice. Are there limits to what politicians can say to win votes? Should religious leaders be allowed to preach hatred, even in close confines? What do we teach our children in school? What does all this mean to the immigration officer at the airport who does not know that Mohammed is the most common name in the world?

Singapore, a cosmopolitan city-State with a multiracial and multireligious population, is particularly vulnerable. We have experienced ugly racial and religious riots before and have learned that racial and religious harmony should never be taken for granted. It has been necessary for the Government to involve itself in many aspects of ordinary life, including discouraging Christian missionaries from targeting Muslims for conversion, stopping mosques from sharply turning up the volume of their loudspeakers when calling the faithful to prayer, limiting the size of joss sticks which Buddhists and Taoists burn for their rituals and arresting those who incite racial and religious hatred. What may appear to be a small thing to one community can be a serious provocation to another.

This has become the world we live in. We cannot ignore the diversity around us in our everyday life or the tribalism which is in our nature. We will continue to disagree on many things such as the nature of democracy, gender relationships, the death penalty, stem-cell research and what we can or cannot eat. The moment we dismiss those differences as unimportant, or lightly condemn those who disagree with us, the trouble begins.

Therefore, as we strive to achieve the Millennium Goals in the United Nations — and they are worthy Goals — a key task for us is to accept, even celebrate, the differences that divide us in our daily lives. To paraphrase Pope John Paul II, it is only because we are many that we are one, and the United Nations expresses that ideal.

The President: I thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Singapore for his message on the need for tolerance, mutual understanding and respect.

I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Karel de Gucht, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Belgium.

Mr. De Gucht (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): Allow me to congratulate you most warmly, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly. Through you, I would like also to thank your predecessor, Mr. Jean Ping, for the manner in which he conducted the preparatory work for the summit of Heads of State and Government which has just taken place. We are very grateful to him for having successfully met that challenge.

Even though we had hoped for a more ambitious agreement, the summit allowed us to create a much-needed new impetus and new strategic guidelines for our Organization. Only a stronger and more legitimate United Nations will be able to respond to the challenges of the twenty-first century and implement the collective security consensus that we endorsed in the summit's outcome document.

Belgium is a strong advocate of efficient multilateralism. I emphasize the word "efficient" because this is not just a declaration of faith. We need credible structures and strong institutions capable of effectively implementing our international commitments and addressing our common concerns. It is all too easy to indulge in rhetoric; we have to translate our words into action. That is why, in that context, I am pleased with the progress made during the summit.

I am particularly pleased with the consensus reached whereby security, peace, development and human rights are not only interlinked but mutually reinforcing. That is a significant step forward in our efforts to build a more peaceful, more prosperous and more equitable world. That idea will guide our actions and form the basis of our approach. Without peace, there can be no development, and human rights can often be sorely tested. In the absence of development and respect for human rights, stability and security become elusive.

The link between development, stability and human rights becomes most acutely apparent in fragile or failing States. These are often States devastated by conflict or by civil war — States whose leaders are no longer capable of meeting the basic needs of their people. Often, their economic situation has deteriorated dramatically, and sometimes their society itself is in disarray. A large number of the people of such States may be displaced. They may have fled, may be subject to abuse or exploitation and therefore cannot enjoy any of the guarantees that a State should be able to provide to its citizens.

Some States are at risk of becoming zones of lawlessness, in which terrorist and criminal activities can thrive. The uncontrolled exploitation of natural resources can fuel all sorts of criminal networks or conflicts — often with an ethnic dimension — in which large numbers of weapons can circulate uncontrolled.

Such States must return to peace, stability and the rule of law. They must take control of their own future and gradually begin to consider their prospects for development. This is not an easy task. The challenge is tremendous. Almost simultaneously, it is necessary to rebuild State institutions; disarm combatants, give them new prospects and reintegrate them into communities that are often impoverished; reorganize the army and security forces; and give the State the means to restore its authority, organize elections and create conditions conducive to development.

We must help them break that vicious circle and regain their place in the community of nations. In that respect, the establishment of a Peacebuilding Commission is crucial. The creation of such a Commission not only illustrates our common resolve to help such States on their path to recovery; it allows us, first and foremost, better to coordinate and focus our efforts. Political, humanitarian, military and financial resources must be mobilized and used effectively to achieve our common goals.

That is particularly true in the case of sub-Saharan African countries that are ravaged by deadly and prolonged conflicts, with the primary victims being the civilian population.

The establishment of such a Commission would generate great hope. It is our common responsibility to make it a success. Belgium wants to contribute actively, including by sharing the experience it acquired in the transition processes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Burundi.

Belgium also attaches great importance to promoting the protection of human rights. My country welcomes the strengthening of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the decision to establish a Human Rights Council. But we regret that the summit was not able to finalize the Council's modalities.

Belgium has fully supported the reform and will continue to focus on it. Democracy and respect for human rights are some of our common values and underpin our efforts to promote peace and stability. From now on, those values will be part of our collective security consensus and must be incorporated into our global approach throughout the entire United Nations system. They are our common responsibility.

Among the summit's other achievements, I should like also to highlight the "responsibility to protect". This represents a step forward in the quest for solutions to the most glaring injustices. In the aftermath of the genocides that marked our last century, we solemnly pledged that such atrocities would never happen again.

Let me now turn to good governance, which is essential if our efforts to create a more stable and prosperous world are to be successful. The summit outcome document repeatedly underlines its importance, and rightly so.

Good governance is not a moralistic concept imposed from the outside. It is not about giving good or bad grades, and even less about good and bad students. It is not for others to say what are good policies and what are bad policies. No — good governance is synonymous with effective governance and goes hand in hand with sovereignty. It is about governance that can produce results, make a difference for citizens and create fertile ground for development. Without it, the support of the international community cannot produce the desired results. Without it, the aid of the international community will not find the fertile ground essential to create the conditions for greater prosperity and stability.

We have pledged to attain the objective of allocating 0.7 per cent of our gross national product to official development assistance. We will keep our promise. But we are aware that development is not only a question of money; first and foremost, it is a question of the effective use of resources. The necessary conditions must be established. What matters is the outcome on the ground. Poverty is not inevitable; all peoples have a future that belongs to them. They must take charge of it.

We accordingly have stated, in paragraph 11 of the summit outcome document (resolution 60/1), "good governance and the rule of law ... are essential for sustained economic growth, sustainable development and the eradication of poverty and hunger". In the same outcome document, we also clearly reaffirmed our commitment to good governance and the rule of law, and reaffirmed that each country must take responsibility for its own development. Those are the terms of our global partnership for development, as set out in the Millennium Declaration, the Monterrey Consensus and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

All components of the international community have demonstrated generosity. That is particularly true of the European Union. But the international community can hardly be held responsible for the failure of States to protect or assist all or part of their populations. It is difficult to understand why today we must launch donor appeals to deal with the large-scale destruction of houses by a Government that deliberately leaves some 500,000 of its citizens homeless.

That reasoning with regard to the subject of good governance also applies to the similar concepts of democracy and the rule of law. Those are extremely important objectives, both for the development of our societies and for the security of States. But, neither democracy nor the rule of law can be artificially imposed from outside. This is not about dictating exogenous models; we must take a bottom-up approach in creating suitable conditions for the emergence of mechanisms that ensure people's equitable participation in their own governance, in a spirit of inclusivity. In that regard, our first priorities should be the modernization of societies and States and the emancipation of women and children and their inclusion in the global dynamic. Past experience shows that the shortest path to democracy and the rule of law is the modernization of society. The role — indeed, the responsibility — of the international community is to galvanize that modernization process.

We have a great responsibility. Before the end of the year, the Peacebuilding Commission must be established. We also have the task of making the Human Rights Council operational. I sincerely hope that the spirit that prevailed during the summit will also guide the work of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly. We must continue to show determination, perseverance and vision in carrying out our work. Only through constant commitment will we make the United Nations the primary instrument for international relations.

That is the important task ahead of us. Our own credibility is at stake. We must once again make the United Nations the instrument par excellence of our strategy to build a more stable and more prosperous world for all. Our peoples demand that. Belgium is willing to rise to that challenge and to shoulder its responsibilities.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Rodolphe Adada, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Francophonie of the Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Adada (Congo) (*spoke in French*): I should like at the outset to sincerely congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at the present session. That election is a sign of confidence in your qualities as a statesman and a recognition of your country, Sweden, which reminds us of its illustrious son Dag Hammarskjöld, the second Secretary-General of the Organization, who sacrificed his life for the cause of humanity. I should also like to express to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Jean Ping, Minister of State, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Gabonese Republic, our heartfelt congratulations on the skill and wisdom with which he guided the work of the fifty-ninth session and successfully led the difficult negotiations that produced the document recently adopted at the World Summit (resolution 60/1). Finally, we commend the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his courageous and tireless initiatives to renew and revitalize the United Nations system.

The sixtieth session of the General Assembly is taking place in an international situation characterized not only by recurrent wars but also by the resurgence of terrorist acts that spare no region in the world and by natural disasters that have plunged many families into mourning. We wish to express to the Government and the people of the United States of America our sincerest condolences following Hurricane Katrina.

Combating terrorism, like preserving our environment, calls for greater solidarity. The United Nations, whose sixtieth anniversary we are celebrating, remains the essential tool for expressing that solidarity. It is only the United Nations that will enable us to face the formidable challenges of the future.

The Congo therefore welcomes the adoption of the outcome document of the High-level Plenary Meeting, which sets out the main course of action to be taken. The outcome document gives us reasons for hope about ways in which to meet the challenges facing our world. At the same time, it gives rise to some questions.

The Congo welcomes the clear reaffirmation by all heads of State or Government of their commitment to continue to discuss and seek solutions to the world's main concerns: issues of development, collective peace and security, human rights and the rule of law, and strengthening the United Nations.

We welcome the consensus regarding the need to create a Peacebuilding Commission and a Human Rights Council. A Human Rights Council would, together with the International Criminal Court, enhance the effectiveness of mechanisms to promote and defend human rights.

Institutional reform of the United Nations — encompassing, of course, all its principal organs, including the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and the Secretariat — like reform of the internal management of our Organization, is both a political and a moral imperative that would enable the United Nations to move with the times and to prepare more effectively to face the coming decades.

The Congo regrets, however, that the serious issue of disarmament was not even mentioned in the outcome document because of a lack of consensus, even though nuclear weapons, weapons of mass destruction and the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons are the greatest threats to humanity. The Congo reaffirms its full support for the objective of general and complete disarmament and the total elimination of weapons of mass destruction.

Africa has always been a source of concern for the United Nations, and the Security Council with good reason spends most of its time on Africa. We have reason to be pleased that some degree of progress has been made in several countries.

In Burundi, we welcome the efforts of the international community, which a month ago led to the successful completion of the electoral process in that country. We welcome the Central African Republic's return to constitutional order after several years of crisis and instability. These countries deserve increased support from the international community so as to consolidate situations that are still fragile.

In the Sudan, we welcome the reconciliation between the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), the central Government and the new Government of national unity, which has just been established. But the reconciliation between the north and the south in Sudan should not lead us to forget the tragedy that has for two years been affecting another segment of the population in the west of the country, namely, Darfur. We call for greater mobilization on the part of the international community in support of the African Union's efforts to bring an immediate end to that political and humanitarian crisis.

In Côte d'Ivoire, because of the differences between the parties to the conflict and despite the tireless efforts on the part of the United Nations and the African Union, the holding of elections, initially set for October 2005, has now been brought into question. We urge our Ivorian brothers to rise above their differences in the higher interest of their country and of peace and stability in the subregion.

Peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo determine the stability and development of the whole of Central Africa and the Great Lakes region. We applaud the efforts by the international community in support of the electoral process leading to a successful transition in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Our subregion was very much involved in those efforts. As current chairman of the Economic Community of Central African States, the President of the Republic of the Congo, Mr. Denis Sassou-Nguesso, was assigned by his peers, following the twelfth Conference of Heads of State and Government held in June 2005 at Brazzaville, the task of promoting successful transition. Pursuant to that mandate, together with my colleagues from Angola, Gabon and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we met with the international partners of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, namely Belgium, the European Union and, of course, the United Nations.

Concerning the Great Lakes region, the first summit meeting of the International Conference on the Great Lakes, which was held in November 2004 at Dar es Salaam, aroused great hopes for a return to peace, stability and development in that subregion.

In a few months, the second summit meeting of the International Conference will be held at Nairobi and will adopt a security, stability and development pact, under which our countries intend to implement action programmes and protocols in order to make a reality of their desire for a shared future of peace, security and development.

The International Conference on the Great Lakes Region is a unique experience of regional peacebuilding. We very much hope that this subregion will be the first to implement the reforms proposed by the Secretary-General concerning peacebuilding.

We would like to take this opportunity to reiterate the appeal made by the President of the Republic of the Congo to the international community in general and to the development partners in particular to make the Great Lakes region a special development area.

Nine of the eleven countries that make up our subregion of Central Africa are now in a post-conflict situation. This subject was discussed at length at the twenty-third meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, which was held at Brazzaville from 29 August to 2 September 2005.

We welcome the existence and work of that committee, of which my country is now chair, and at the same time we ask the United Nations to act on the outcome of the committee's multidisciplinary mission to Central Africa in June 2003.

In the Middle East, notwithstanding the persistence of the Israel-Palestine conflict, we welcome and encourage the efforts made over the past several months by the Prime Minister of Israel, Mr. Ariel Sharon, and the President of the Palestinian Authority, Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, which reflect a common desire to bring about a fair and lasting solution.

Consolidation of peace, restoration of macroeconomic balances and combating pandemics such as HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, these are the top priorities of my Government.

Our Government intends to expand its activities to deal with other scourges. We organized in Brazzaville in June 2005 a conference on trypanosomiasis, during which a resolution declaring trypanosomiasis the number-one priority for public health, like HIV/AIDS and malaria, was adopted. We request that special attention be given to this disease.

Concerned about preserving the environment, the Congo and other countries of the subregion entered

into a partnership agreement with the international community in 2002 within the framework of the Congo River Basin Initiative.

The second summit meeting of heads of State and Government on conservation and sustainable management of forest ecosystems in Central Africa was held at Brazzaville in February 2005, and adopted a long-term strategy for the preservation of the forest, fauna and biodiversity in the greater Congo basin.

I wish to thank the European Union, the United States of America, France and Germany for their support of this initiative.

In conclusion, I wish to thank the African Group for having endorsed the candidacy of the Congo for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for 2006 to 2007. I would like to reassure you that we are fully determined to work resolutely for peace, freedom and justice throughout the world.

The President: I now call on Her Excellency Mrs. Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović, Minister for Foreign Affairs and European Integration of the Republic of Croatia.

Mrs. Grabar-Kitarović (Croatia): Allow me, Sir, to express the pleasure of the Republic of Croatia at your election to the post of President of the General Assembly. At this crucial moment in the history of the United Nations, we are gratified that a friend of multilateralism will be guiding the work of the Assembly. May I also commend the work of your predecessor, Mr. Jean Ping, for his remarkable leadership and tenacity in bringing the fifty-ninth session to a successful conclusion.

I would like to extend the sincere condolences of the people of Croatia to the people of the United States of America on the loss of life and suffering occasioned by Hurricane Katrina. We can take some small comfort from the fact that at such times of need nations instinctively reach out to help others. This provides vivid illustration of the best of humanity and its enormous potential to do good and build a better world.

We believe that the United Nations continues to be indispensable for building a better world. All States benefit from a strong United Nations. Small and medium-sized States, which form the great majority of Members, can articulate their diverse interests at the global level through this universal forum more effectively than in any other. Croatia remembers that the United Nations played a prominent role in its re-emergence as a sovereign State.

Yet the difficulty with which agreement was achieved on the outcome document reflects the present state of the world in which we live. We should not look at this imperfect document through rose-colored eyeglasses. Rather, we should grasp the potential that it holds for moving towards broader and deeper reforms. While we may have broad agreement on the goal — a more efficient and effective United Nations working in the service of mankind — we have created only some of the contours of reform. As the Secretary-General has reminded us, we should not consider that the job has been done. The details remain incomplete.

Let us move now to the details without delay. Let us move forward in helping developing countries achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Let us operationalize the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council. Let us introduce the processes required to strengthen Secretariat management.

Diplomacy is often about compromise. That word has been used frequently in describing the World Summit Outcome document (resolution 60/1). However, compromise should not be used as a synonym for regression. Development is a pillar of the United Nations mandate, and the MDGs are international obligations.

Over the years, the development dialogue has resulted in a number of key international documents, which bear witness to the progress on poverty-related issues and the ways in which we have agreed to address those vital challenges. Johannesburg and Monterrey are prominent among them.

While it is important to reaffirm the agreed international development framework, it is equally necessary to move forward. Comprehensive debt relief, on which there was progress earlier this year at Gleneagles, and better trade access to the markets of developed countries, which must be an outcome of the Doha round, chart the way forward.

The road to the achievement of the MDGs on which we set out five years ago has been an uneven one. There has been rapid growth in some parts of the globe, resulting in the movement of millions out of poverty. At the same time, sub-Saharan Africa has

stagnated. Small island developing States have special vulnerabilities which threaten their very existence. The achievement of the MDG targets by 2015 requires national and international implementation strategies.

We know that the current level of aid is not enough to achieve the MDGs. It is necessary to look at ways to increase the effectiveness of existing aid, introduce innovative sources of financing and adhere to the agreed timetable for progressively increasing flows. In this regard, Croatia supports the Declaration on Innovative Sources of Financing for Development.

As a country with an economy in transition and as a European Union (EU) candidate, Croatia is undergoing significant internal structural change and external policy scrutiny. We seek to balance those often competing demands by including our MDG obligations within the context of other policy implementation in the transition and EU accession processes. We have developed national development targets based on the MDGs, taking into account our progress to date.

From its coastline, with its over 1,200 islands, to its Karst hinterland and the mountains and plains beyond, Croatia's environment offers rare diversity in a relatively small geographic area. We are vitally interested in the preservation of our national environmental heritage, as well as of the whole of the common environment of mankind. For that reason, we welcome the extensive treatment of environmental issues in the outcome document and reiterate our support for the key concept of sustainable development.

An effective multilateral system must rely upon the interaction of States which are responsible domestic and international actors. In recent years, threats to peace and security have become very common topics of discussion in global affairs. With good reason, much effort has been invested in rallying the required international cooperation for the creation of strategies to confront old and new threats to States. Croatia believes that the United Nations should continue to be in the frontline of that process.

The fight against terrorism and transnational organized crime is among the greatest challenges we face. Last week, the Croatian President signed the Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism. That Convention, which took several years to negotiate, is a step forward towards concluding a comprehensive international convention on terrorism. States must make greater efforts to ensure that it comes to fruition during the sixtieth session of the General Assembly.

Croatia regrets that there has been no meaningful progress on disarmament and non-proliferation. The ongoing stalemate, coming, as it does, in the aftermath of the unsuccessful Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in May, is a disappointment. We support the recent efforts by a number of States in relation to the NPT-based upon the three pillars of non-proliferation, disarmament and peaceful nuclear cooperation — as well as the universal adoption of the comprehensive safeguards agreements and additional protocols.

Countries which have experienced conflict and subsequently rebuilt their national capacities and institutions understand well the link between security and development. Both security and development are individual pillars of the work of the United Nations. However, we know that together they are vital for sustainable development. Security and development are mutually reinforcing, providing the foundations for the well-being of individuals and of the States in which they live.

Croatia took an active interest in the negotiations on the Peacebuilding Commission. It is clear that such an intergovernmental body is needed to fill a void in the United Nations system. While the expertise of the United Nations in peacekeeping is not in doubt, the challenges of building and entrenching peace are different. We have argued for the inclusion in the membership of the Commission of countries with national experience in peacebuilding. We are pleased that that position was reflected in the outcome document. The inclusion of small States whose own experience has spanned the transition from conflict to relief and, subsequently, development, will add an important dimension which would be absent if the Commission were constituted solely by large, wealthy or powerful States.

The Peacebuilding Commission should assist States to develop and strengthen their key governance institutions and assist local authorities in creating the conditions for sustainable development, including economic growth. It should always ensure that the process is one which is driven by the State concerned and by the key stakeholders within it. If internal

conflicts can be quelled and prevented from recurring, then we are creating the conditions for a safer world.

We believe that the reform of the Security Council is necessary with regard to both its membership and its working methods. We look forward to further progress being made during the current session of the General Assembly on this matter. Clearly, any solution will require the support of as large a group of Member States as possible.

Croatia has been a factor of stability in a neighbourhood where past instability has taken a heavy toll, not only on the countries in the region but also on the broader international community. Our enhanced cooperation with our neighbours is a sure basis for entrenching stability and ensuring preconditions for the expansion of economic opportunities for South-East Europe as a whole. We shall continue to play that regional role.

Having successfully evolved through the peacebuilding spectrum, Croatia is now playing its part as a contributor to more than half of the United Nations peacekeeping operations throughout the world, and training peacekeepers from emerging troop-contributing countries. We are using our national experience to help others in need.

We are now ready to take the next step in our responsibilities as a Member of the United Nations and as a global citizen. For that reason, the Republic of Croatia has presented its candidature for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council in the elections to be held in 2007.

The postulates within the United Nations Charter on human rights serve as a universal measure for all nations and peoples. They are at the core of the work of the United Nations. That is why we have supported the efforts to reform and strengthen the United Nations human rights machinery. Croatia supports the decision to strengthen the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and to increase the resources allocated to it. Existing machinery in the area of human rights — one of the fundamental pillars of the United Nations system — requires such reforms.

Croatia welcomes the decision to establish a Human Rights Council as a new organ with the responsibility for promoting universal respect for the protection of human rights and addressing their violation, wherever they may occur. We are disappointed that the necessary political will was not found to conclude an agreement on the Council in the lead-up to the world summit. However, we will work constructively with other Member States in seeking consensus so that as yet undecided elements relating to that Council can be settled during the sixtieth session.

Croatia is pleased to see the inclusion of an agreement on the "responsibility to protect" in the outcome document. The frustration and suffering that can be caused by inaction on the part of the international community, inert in the face of aggression, has been witnessed all too frequently. We welcome this positive development as a step towards a new normative framework.

Democracy brings freedom for the individual and contributes to the legitimacy of States. As a signatory of the Warsaw Declaration: Towards a Community of Democracies, Croatia fully recognizes the importance of strengthening democracy and advancing its global acceptance as a universal value. Capacity-building can strengthen States by reinforcing the institutions that ensure the rule of law, equity, access and stable government.

Croatia supports the enhancement of the capacity of the United Nations to promote and reinforce democratic institutions and practices around the world. We welcome the decision to establish a Democracy Fund and have, as a concrete measure of our support, made a financial contribution towards its establishment.

Only an efficiently functioning United Nations system can respond to contemporary challenges. This requires effective mandates for the principal organs. Yet, there are distinctly different conceptions among Member States of the principle of State sovereignty. These differences, as we have seen in the recent negotiations, impact directly upon the prospects of adjusting the mandates and interrelationships of the principal organs of the United Nations to the realities of the twenty-first century. We all have more work ahead of us on this account.

Croatia supports the efforts to introduce significant human resource management reforms in the Secretariat. The United Nations cannot afford to have a Secretariat that is not managed in accordance with contemporary standards and practices. For the same reason, we support system-wide coherence, both in management and policy.

There have been many high-minded words uttered on behalf of the United Nations in this Hall during the past week. When we leave this place, let us not forget the principles that we have invoked and the pledges that we have made. Only this can ensure that we accelerate progress towards achievement of both the MDGs and United Nations reform. For its part, you can be assured that the Republic of Croatia shall continue to be a constructive participant in these efforts.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Farouk Kasrawi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

Mr. Kasrawi (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): Mr. President, allow me at the outset to congratulate you warmly on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixtieth session. I would also like to express my confidence that your well-known wisdom and competence will contribute to enriching and focusing the deliberations of this Assembly. Moreover, I would like to express my gratitude to your predecessor, Mr. Jean Ping, for the strenuous efforts he exerted during the past session. I would especially like to convey my appreciation to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his notable efforts in advancing the reform process in the United Nations.

From this rostrum, allow me to convey my country's solidarity with the people and Government of the United States of America for the tragedy that was inflicted on certain regions and cities by Hurricane Katrina. I would like to extend our sincere condolences to the families of the victims and our sympathy for the destruction caused by the hurricane.

Tackling the reform of the United Nations requires the objective recognition that the Organization, since its establishment in 1945, has achieved a large measure of success in the realization of the purposes and principles of its Charter. Objectivity further requires the admission that substantive and concrete changes have affected the core of the international order and the network of international relations; this has made it imperative to review the role of the United Nations as a matter of a real and urgent international necessity. Such a review should focus on a comprehensive revitalization of this role in order to enable the Organization to respond to such challenges and changes affecting the international system.

The United Nations Charter is a document that is capable of coping with international developments, provided that Member States have the political will to introduce the necessary reforms into the work of the main organs of the Organization. The reforms should ensure that these bodies are able to fulfil the ambitions of member States and, at the same time, provide the environment and mechanism necessary to guarantee the faithful application of the Charter's provisions and the implementation of resolutions adopted, particularly Security Council resolutions, without discrimination.

In this context, we would like to welcome the results of this year's world summit and the adoption of the outcome document, even though more could have been achieved in the document, particularly in relation to the renewal of the international community's commitment to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Nevertheless, we hope that the document will be a starting point to development and reform, which we all hope to achieve, so that the United Nations remains the cornerstone of the system of international relations.

While emphasizing the principles of the non-use of force in international relations and non-interference in the internal affairs of States, we believe that the Charter's provisions, if applied, would respond to the new and unconventional challenges that constitute a possible threat to international peace and security. The Security Council can deal with such challenges appropriately and in a timely manner, if the will exists to do so, without exceeding its powers. This requires that serious consideration be given to revitalizing the Council's mechanisms in order to make them more democratic, transparent and representative. That, in turn, requires an expansion of both permanent and non-permanent membership of the Council in a way that reflects the current international situation and the significant increase in United Nations membership.

In the context of reform, it is imperative to strengthen the General Assembly and enhance its role, which complements that of the Security Council in the maintenance of international peace and security. The role of the General Assembly is central, since it is the organ in which all United Nations Member States are represented. It is, therefore, capable of dealing effectively with the requirements of enhanced multilateral international cooperation and the development of the policies necessary for such cooperation.

We support the development of the work of the Economic and Social Council in order to resolve emerging economic, social and development challenges and problems. We would like to emphasize the Council's leading role in coordinating and guiding the international development process and promoting the achievement of the MDGs, which Member States pledged to implement and fulfil by the year 2015.

It is important to consider seriously the current coordination mechanisms with other international organizations involved in development and the liberalization of world economy and trade. It is also imperative to consider the reduction of the debt of developing countries, in accordance with a methodology that helps to achieve sustainable development and bridge the widening gap between developed and developing countries.

Moreover, this development methodology ought to parallel commitments by States towards certain key issues, such as the promotion of good governance, respect for human rights and basic freedoms and the combating of corruption. This is done through a reform process that should take into consideration the particular cultural specificities of each State.

Confronting the existing challenges and settling conflicts requires us to emphasize the necessity to respect the rule of law and human rights.

Combating international terrorism is a priority that requires the close cooperation of all on the basis of the principles mentioned earlier. The same can be said of responses to acts of aggression against others, which should accord with existing commitments under the Charter, international law and Security Council resolutions. To safeguard human rights, it is crucial to revitalize human rights mechanisms, promote their work and establish new machinery, including a Human Rights Council. In the same context, respect for the rule of law requires that we address more serious crimes against the international community — hence the pivotal role of the International Criminal Court in combating war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity. Moreover, the promotion of the rule of law makes it imperative to resort to the International Court of Justice to settle disputes between States and to respect its decisions and advisory opinions.

My country is committed to reform and development. We believe that the ideal paradigm for reform is one that comes from within and aims to enhance the protection of human rights and basic freedoms, as well as expanding grass-roots participation in national decision-making. Jordan is in the process of launching a national agenda aimed at formulating a comprehensive reform methodology in the political, economic and social areas over the next 10 years. The agenda also aims to promote grass-roots participation in political decision-making on the basis of a solid democratic choice.

Any real reform and development in a State is affected, positively or negatively, by the political and geographical realities of the region. The pattern of reform in Jordan and the Middle East will be more sustainable and progressive if the political settlement based on the international terms of reference of the peace process, the road map and the Arab peace initiative attains its goal of achieving a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

Jordan welcomes the Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and certain settlements in the northern West Bank. We stress that this withdrawal is not an alternative to the road map but must be part of it, and that both the Israeli and Palestinian sides must carry out their respective obligations under the road map as well as the recent Sharm el-Sheikh Understandings. In that regard, we call upon Israel to withdraw its military forces from the Palestinian towns reoccupied in September 2000 and to cease all forms of settlement activity in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

We also call upon Israel to cease the construction of the separation wall in the occupied Palestinian territories and to demolish the segments that have already been built in those territories. We call on it to return the property that was seized and to pay compensation for the damage incurred. The construction of the wall along its current route constitutes a clear and continuous violation of the established norms of international law, including the right to self-determination, human rights principles and the rules of international humanitarian law. That fact was emphasized by the International Court of Justice in its landmark advisory opinion on the subject.

We also urge support for the Palestinian National Authority in its genuine efforts to preserve the truce and to deal firmly with any violations of it or the ceasefire. We call upon the international community and the Quartet in particular to provide all possible

assistance to the Authority. We emphasize here that the most important outcome of the road map is the establishment of an independent, viable Palestinian State that is geographically contiguous, with East Jerusalem as its capital, whose borders are based on those existing before 5 June 1967.

Moreover, we must create conditions conducive to completing the peace process in order to achieve a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East, on the basis of full Israeli withdrawal from all the occupied Arab territories, including the Syrian Golan Heights, and to reach an agreed solution on the issue of the Palestinian refugees, based on General Assembly resolution 194 (III). That should lead to the establishment of normal relations between the Arab States and Israel, in accordance with the Arab peace initiative and the international terms of reference of the peace process.

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan rejects all forms and manifestations of terrorism, regardless of justifications. We stand together on the front lines, in word and deed, to eradicate that scourge, which has afflicted the entire international community and left no one unscathed. My country also rejects all unjust and suspicious attempts to tie that criminal phenomenon to a specific religion, culture or geographical region, and we stand firm against any such attempt to tie it to the Islamic religion. Islam, in substance and practice, is based on moderation and facilitation. It was a pioneer in promoting the protection of human rights and safeguarding the life, dignity and property of persons. It rejects any infringement on these concepts, even in time of war. In that context, the Amman message would emphasize that this divine religion is beyond any suspicion linking its teachings to incitement to harm innocent human beings.

Jordan welcomes the adoption of the Convention on the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism and supports the efforts under way to ensure the adoption of the comprehensive convention to combat terrorism. We further endorse the proposal made by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to establish an international centre to combat terrorism, which was adopted by the Counter-terrorism International Conference, held in Saudi Arabia early this year.

Jordan will continue to assist Iraq in overcoming its current crisis and in consolidating its safety and security. We condemn all aspects and practices of terrorism and extremism in the country, which daily kills scores of innocent people. My country calls on all groups and sectors of the Iraqi population to reach consensus on the basic principles and elements necessary to preserve the unity of Iraq and the inviolability of its territory and to ensure that it continues to belong to the Arab world. We also call for the respect of religious, ethnic and sectarian diversity in the framework of free democratic choice, without prejudice to the rights of its minorities. We reiterate our support for the political process in Iraq and call on the international community to lend its support to create the appropriate conditions for its success. We call also on the United Nations to continue playing its important role.

Let me now turn to an issue that is important to Jordan: the drying out of the Dead Sea, and how to pre-empt an ensuing environmental crisis through the implementation of the Red Sea-Dead Sea Canal Project. An agreement was reached recently by the relevant parties and beneficiaries of the project, namely Jordan, Israel and the Palestinian National Authority, on a feasibility study for the construction of the canal. We look forward to continued international support for this project and the implementation of all its phases, in accordance with the agreement mentioned earlier.

The future of the Middle East requires the creation of strong civil societies enjoying decent lives and deriving their guidance from their strong belief in their heritage. We are endeavouring to achieve this goal at the national level through effective reform projects, whose benefits are beginning to be evident in Jordan.

But stability, security and peace are essential to creating a suitable environment for such societies. Putting an end to the Israeli occupation of Arab territories and reaching a just and comprehensive solution will contribute to bringing about a bright future.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Vuk Drašković, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia and Montenegro.

Mr. Drašković (Serbia and Montenegro) (*spoke in Serbian; English translation furnished by the delegation*): Seven days ago, from this rostrum, I warned that the situation in Kosovo and Metohija — a province of Serbia administered by the United Nations since 10 June 1999 — poses a serious threat to the

stability of the Balkans. Serbia and Montenegro supports the conclusion of the International Contact Group that there will be no return to the situation before 10 June 1999.

I would like to recall that, before 1999, the regime in Serbia insisted on the limited autonomy of Kosovo, while the Albanian political leaders insisted on its independence. Those two opposing positions led to an armed conflict, and later to NATO air strikes against Serbia and Montenegro. That conflict ended following the adoption of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999), which called for a protectorate in Kosovo but did not call into question the territorial integrity of Serbia and Montenegro.

The Contact Group's conclusion that there will be no return to the situation before June 1999 has to apply equally to both sides — Serbian and Albanian. Consequently, there can be neither limited autonomy nor independence for Kosovo. By proposing a status that was greater than autonomy but less than independence for Kosovo, the democratic Government in Belgrade demonstrated its full commitment to reaching a compromise solution. Unfortunately, the Kosovo Albanians, only interested in independence, have not budged an inch from their 1999 position.

Unfortunately, I have to note that the international community is partly to blame for the tragic position the Serbian and other non-Albanian minorities in Kosovo find themselves in, as well as for the political extremism of the Albanian majority and the many crimes that have been committed. The standards set for Kosovo are not even close to being fulfilled. Are we therefore going to abandon the "Standards before Status" policy? From 10 June 1999 to the present, approximately 200,000 Serbs and Montenegrins, as well as Turks, Croats, Roma, Jews and other non-Albanians, have been expelled from Kosovo. Close to 80 per cent of the territory is now inhabited only by Albanians. Several hundred Serbs have been killed, including many children. Approximately 40,000 Serbian homes have been demolished or set on fire, as well as 150 churches and monasteries that were centuries old. The remaining Serbs and other non-Albanians live in so-called enclaves, without guarantees for their personal safety and their freedom of movement. No one in present-day Europe is so tragically unprotected.

In spite the foregoing, we hope that the United Nations military and police forces will remain in Kosovo. Without their presence, the tragedy of Serbs and other minorities would be complete. Troops from the United States, Italy, France and other countries should be given credit for keeping the Serbian Christian monasteries designated or nominated as international world heritage sites from being blown up or set on fire. We would like to thank the United Nations and ask the United Nations forces to stay in Kosovo as long as necessary.

For months now, Albanian extremists have been openly threatening to launch a pogrom against the remaining Serbs, Montenegrins and other non-Albanians — and even against United Nations forces — unless Kosovo's independence is proclaimed. Recent killings of young Serbs announced the beginning of that scenario. Ultimatums and threats to commit crimes and terrorism cannot be accepted anywhere in the world, including in Kosovo. I hope that that will finally and decisively be made clear to the Albanian majority in the province. Serbia and Montenegro demands a European level of human rights protection for national communities in Kosovo, protection of churches and monasteries and recognition of the European status of the existing State borders with the Republic of Macedonia and the Republic of Albania. No more and no less is acceptable, either under the Charter of the United Nations or under Security Council resolution 1244 (1999). Our rights do not threaten any right of the Albanian majority. An independent State of Kosovo is not a guaranteed right, but an extreme demand.

We are truly and fully committed to a compromise, but compromise does not mean that one side gets everything while the other side gets nothing. We are for reconciliation and a common European future, in which Serbs, Montenegrins and Albanians will be good neighbours and best friends for each other.

A stable and European Kosovo means a stable Western Balkans region, and vice versa. The choice is obvious.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Mustafa Osman Ismail, Minister for External Relations of the Republic of the Sudan.

Mr. Ismail (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like to begin my statement with a quotation from the Koran:

> "Invite all to the way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious: for thy Lord knoweth best ..." (*The Holy Koran, XVI:125*).

Last year, I declared from this rostrum that peace — the continuing strategic objective of the Government of Sudan — was at hand. Today, from the same rostrum, I would like to note that peace has become a reality with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the adoption of the new Constitution. We have started to implement the Agreement in accordance with a fixed timetable.

Unfortunately, as soon as we started to implement the Agreement with our partners in the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), we were faced with a great tragedy: the death of John Garang, the first Vice President of the Republic. With his passing, the country has lost an invaluable partner and participant in the peace process. It was not just a loss for the Sudan, but a great loss for Africa and all peace-loving people. Such tragedies are the true tests of our will, and our brethren in the SPLM have responsibly come through that crisis and difficult test, putting aside their bitter shock and continuing to build a durable peace.

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement was not limited solely to issues between the north and the south. It set up a comprehensive framework for resolving justly all the problems of our country. It has established rules for a political regime that considers citizenship to involve rights, duties and obligations — a regime that is based on democracy, the rule of law, good governance, respect for human rights and the equitable division of wealth and power based on fair standards that will ensure comprehensive peace.

We are fully committed to the letter and the spirit of the Peace Agreement, and we accept and understand the magnitude of our responsibility to fulfil it. We are fully confident that bringing peace to the Sudan will have a positive impact on regional stability and allow the Sudan to continue to play its proper role within the international community.

As we have begun to implement the Peace Agreement, we call upon the international community immediately to lift all commercial and economic sanctions and restrictions, to cancel all of the Sudan's external debt and to fulfil the pledges it made at the Oslo conference. Such actions will provide support for the Agreement and promote reconstruction and development in the Sudan. In that context, we express appreciation and gratitude to the United Nations for the important role it has played in the implementation of the Agreement, particularly the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Jan Pronk.

The people of Darfur are still not able to live in conditions of peace. We will make every effort to implement the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the Declaration of Principles adopted at Abuja, with a view to bringing about that objective. We will continue to cooperate with the international community in improving the humanitarian and security situation, which has already improved greatly. But that is not enough. We hope to ensure complete stability in Darfur. The Government's commitment to agreements and arrangements entered into relating to the achievement of a ceasefire and the improvement of the security situation should be matched by a similar commitment from the armed movements, which should end their violations and agree to an immediate ceasefire. The international community should continue to put pressure on them to negotiate seriously in order to achieve a peaceful solution to the problem.

My Government underlines the importance of achieving definitive peace in Darfur as quickly as possible. We have a three-track plan aimed at returning Darfur to its proper situation. The first is the political track, which is designed to resolve the root causes of the dispute and to reach an agreement. The second relates to the implementation of the voluntary repatriation programmes. The third relates to the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes. In the framework of those commitments, the Government has encouraged reconciliation among tribe and community leaders, which would help to provide a solution to the root causes of the conflict.

In order to improve the security situation and achieve a peaceful resolution of the conflict, the Government is making every effort, with the participation of the international community, to deal with the urgent humanitarian problem and the problem of internally displaced persons and refugees. We have undertaken a number of development plans to deal with

the dispute about resources, which represents one of the main problems. In that context, the Government is looking forward to entering into an effective international partnership with a view to bringing about those ambitious plans and establishing a special fund for development and rehabilitation in Darfur similar to that agreed to at the Oslo conference for the south.

In expressing its appreciation for the efforts of the international community, the Sudan would like to pay tribute to the active role of the African Union. We call on the international community to continue to assist and support that role.

The Sudan adopted a transitional Constitution in July 2005, and the President and Vice-President will exercise their mandate in conformity with its provisions. We have established a Government of National Unity, which will continue the transitional process. We have begun this phase by conducting a responsible dialogue with all members of the political opposition, who continue to operate freely. The transitional Constitution includes human rights provisions ensuring respect for the rights, obligations and fundamental freedoms of all Sudanese citizens. We will continue to work with international organizations in order to develop and promote human rights in the country.

This is the last occasion on which I will speak to the Assembly as Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Sudan, because yesterday a new Minister for Foreign Affairs, my brother Mr. Lam Akol, was appointed by the Popular Movement. I extend to the General Assembly my gratitude and appreciation for its cooperation during my work as Foreign Minister of the Sudan in the past several years.

Tragically, the Palestinian people are still under Israeli occupation. The international community is called upon to force Israel to halt its illegal practices in the occupied Palestinian territories, to dismantle the separation wall, to withdraw from all the Arab territories that it occupied in 1967 and to allow the Palestinian people to realize their legitimate rights, including their right to an independent State, with Al-Quds as its capital. The international community should take action to bring about a comprehensive, peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict, in accordance with the resolutions of international legitimacy, the road map, the principle of land for peace and the Madrid terms of reference.

The Sudan has participated in agreements aimed at putting an end to nuclear proliferation. The conflict-ridden Middle East should be a zone free from nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. International justice and laws should apply in that region, with no exceptions for any State, with a view to ensuring stability and peace, emphasizing the rights of peoples to use nuclear power for peaceful purposes, particularly in scientific research. The Sudan supports the right of all countries, including Iran, to use nuclear power for peaceful purposes, in accordance with International Atomic Energy Agency regulations.

The situation in Iraq is very unstable. The Iraqi people, who are suffering greatly, need the international community to help them to overcome the crisis there. In this respect, we would like to underscore once again our principled position that we must preserve the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Iraq and ensure non-interference in its internal affairs, with a view to bringing about stability and peace and restoring normal living conditions there. We call upon the international community to contribute, as soon as possible, to the rebuilding of Iraq and to support the transitional Government so as to allow the Iraqi people to live in dignity on their land.

The African Union has set up policies and mechanisms aimed at dealing effectively with the dispute resolution and the establishment of stability on that continent, which is rich in resources, including human resources. Africa is continuing to use those resources for development purposes, within the framework of the New Partnership for Africa's Development.

The first meeting of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region restored hope that peace, stability and development can return to the region. We hope that the second such summit will be held within the next few months, and that it will result in a united stance that will lead to peace, security and development in the region. We were encouraged by the meeting that was held on the sidelines of the High-level Plenary Meeting with a view to preparing for a second International Conference on the Great Lakes Region.

In this context, I would like to refer to Somalia — a very important African country, which is trying to move beyond the bitterness of war and conflict and to re-establish itself as a State. Somalia

should receive the cooperation and support that it needs from the international community, and from the United Nations in particular.

Since the Millennium Summit in 2000, some achievements have been made with a view to meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). But the Goals have not been adequately achieved in Africa, which still has to deal with poverty, disease, underdevelopment and debt. As we meet here five years after the first summit, we must pause and consider what we have achieved and what we aspire to achieve. We live in a world in which people have varied standards of living and wealth. The rich have become richer, and the poor have become poorer. The gap between them is great, and there are enormous paradoxes. There are very rich countries whose citizens spend millions of dollars on weight loss, and there are other poor countries that seek just a small fraction of that amount to keep barely alive.

We take this opportunity to reaffirm, as agreed in the framework of the Millennium Declaration, that we must achieve the Millennium Development Goals in order to create a better life for all humanity. Here, we must point out that the Sudan has worked hard to attain the goals and has made significant progress in reducing poverty and increasing basic education levels, despite the unjust siege and the long conflict in the southern part of the country. All those efforts are reflected in Sudan's 2004 MDG report.

In that context, we should stress the importance of the total cancellation of debt. Debt is a great hindrance to achieving the Development Goals in Africa and in the least developed countries. Attaching conditions to debt cancellation will only impede development. Here, we must remind developed countries of their commitments to financing for development, in accordance with the Monterrey Consensus.

An international partnership to achieve the MDGs as envisaged in Goal 8, is essential. Unfortunately, the main difficulty in achieving the Goals is the establishment of such a partnership, which will not be possible without allowing developing, and least developed countries in particular, to integrate fully into the international economy. Imposing unilateral economic sanctions against developing countries hinders free trade and investment. Financing and the transfer of technology are among the other issues encountered in efforts to achieve sustainable development.

We live in a world of many challenges and threats. The international community has recognized that development, peace and security are closely interconnected. The main challenges faced by the international community today are maintaining international peace and security and achieving economic growth and development. Meeting those challenges will be possible only in a collective world led by an effective and capable United Nations.

The Sudan has actively participated in the consultations on creating a framework for collective action and on United Nations reform. We support reform that is in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter and the relevant provisions of international law. We have emphasized the establishment of a new human rights mechanism to address the shortcomings — including politicization, selectivity and double standards — that have prevented the Commission on Human Rights from carrying out its responsibilities. The Sudan believes that we should consider establishing a new mechanism that deals with the negative policies of the past and is committed to the principles of equality among States and respect for equitable geographical representation, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter. On the basis of what the United Nations has successfully achieved in the security, economic and social areas, we should aspire to achieve the objectives of the High-level Plenary Meeting and thus to create a peaceful and safe world in which all of us will shoulder our responsibilities.

Clearly, we all reject terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and we stand together with others to eliminate it; indeed, a counter-terrorism conference is now being held in Khartoum to combat terrorism in East Africa. What we reject are attempts to confuse terrorism with the struggle of peoples for liberation and independence and attempts to link terrorism to a specific religion or culture. Terrorism is an international scourge that is not limited to a specific religion or culture, and we believe that any attempt to confuse the issue could cause problems and weaken our collective resolve to develop a comprehensive strategy to combat it.

The Sudan will continue to be a messenger to States, calling for a dialogue among cultures and

civilizations aimed at attaining humanity's objectives. The international fight against terrorism must be based on the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant provisions of international law. In that context, the Sudan calls for the holding of an international conference to arrive at an agreed definition of terrorism and stresses that the rejection of terrorism does not mean that we should ignore the reasons behind it. We must deal with the root causes of the problem if we are to be successful in eradicating it.

In conclusion, the Sudan reaffirms its belief in the purposes and principles of the Charter. We stress our resolve to continue to work with the international community to strengthen the Organization so that it can efficiently carry out its role and mandate.

The President: I express to the Minister for External Relations of the Sudan my best wishes for the future as he leaves his post.

I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Alcinda Antonio de Abreu, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Republic of Mozambique.

Ms. De Abreu (Mozambique): Allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at the sixtieth session. We are delighted to see a distinguished son of Sweden and a friend of Mozambique in the stewardship of this body and wish to express our confidence that, under your able leadership, our deliberations will produce successful results. I would like to take this opportunity to pay a well-deserved tribute to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Jean Ping, for the remarkable manner in which he spearheaded the deliberations of the fifty-ninth session of General Assembly. May I also commend the Secretary-General for his continued vision and leadership in our collective efforts to pursue the fundamental ideals of the United Nations, in particular the implementation of the international agenda for peace and development highlighted in his report (*A/59/2005*). We encourage him to continue his outstanding work.

We gather here today inspired by the spirit of togetherness and collective vision on the path that we should strive to continue to travel in order to achieve our common aspirations, as underscored throughout the deliberations of the High-level Plenary Meeting. We must seize this momentum to reinforce multilateralism as a guiding principle upon which the international community should rely to adequately face today's challenges. We believe that the emphasis of the World Summit Outcome (resolution 60/1) on the vital importance of an effective multilateral system and our determination to fulfil the commitments we set for ourselves will generate and galvanize good momentum for action aimed at tangible results.

As we celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations, we should reflect on what we want the Organization to be and on what role each country and region should play in these collective endeavours. In recognizing inclusiveness and the equal rights of men and women and of all nations, the Charter of the United Nations builds on our diverse cultural and traditional values to unite us around our common humanity. Our failure to overcome the poverty trap in which developing countries are caught, as well as the constant threat posed by terrorism, indicates the need for an international system that is more inclusive and democratic and that conforms to the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant provisions of international law. It is our firm belief that the United Nations continues to be an indispensable instrument for achieving those objectives. Thus, the strength of the Organization must be high on our agenda. We ought to improve its performance by reforming its organs and structures.

Therefore, it is our sincere hope that United Nations reform will help to foster strong relationships and cooperative links of coordination among all its principal organs, in particular the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council.

Security Council reform should be aimed at building transparency, democracy, openness and consistency with regard to all regions represented in the Organization. In that regard, the growing political commitment and involvement of Africa in the international agenda for peace and stability calls for enhanced representation on the Security Council.

We hope that the recently proposed Peacebuilding Commission will help to keep sustained international attention on countries in transition from post-conflict situations to recovery and long-term development and ensure continued support for them. Indeed, the experience of Mozambique's transition from a post-conflict situation to reconstruction and development testifies to the valuable contribution and impact of the concerted support provided by the United Nations and

the international community for peace and development efforts.

The adoption of the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) gave new momentum to our quest to fight poverty, accelerate human development and facilitate the gradual and effective integration of the developing world into the global economy. Despite the less ambitious outcome of the recently concluded summit, the time has come to build a genuine international partnership and to reaffirm our political will to fully implement internationally agreed commitments.

We need to work diligently to implement the commitments made in Monterrey. In that regard, the establishment of a detailed calendar for the implementation of the goals set on financing for development is vital to generate access to additional financial support for developing countries. To that end, we welcome the decision by the European Union to set collective and specific targets with a view to reaching the internationally agreed target of devoting 0.7 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) to official development assistance (ODA) by 2015.

The sustainable development of low-income countries, particularly in Africa, depends upon a more open, equitable and rules-based multilateral trading system, as trade constitutes an engine for growth and development. In that regard, we view partnership agreements such as the Cotonou Agreement and the African Growth and Opportunity Act as important steps towards fulfilling some of the development objectives. We strongly believe that the completion of the Doha round by 2006 will help to establish an international trading system consistent with development goals and policies.

While developing countries are striving to finance the MDGs, debt servicing has been diverting significant amounts of their limited resources, at the cost of social and economic development. In that context, we reiterate the calls for more radical action by the international community, in line with recommendations that debt relief should cover multilateral and bilateral debt and reduce debt stock and debt servicing by up to 100 per cent. To that end, we support the continuation of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative and other relief measures, particularly those addressing the special needs of African countries.

In that regard, we commend the debt-cancellation decision made by the ministers for finance of the Group of Eight (G-8) in favour of 18 developing countries, including Mozambique. We encourage the G-8 and other development partners to continue with such important initiatives and to address the unsustainable debt burden of many developing countries, so that new resources can be invested in pursuit of poverty reduction.

The Government of the Republic of Mozambique is now fully engaged in the implementation of its programme for 2005-2009 that incorporates our vision of development based on continuity and renewal. That approach is founded on past experiences and programmes pursued in the quest for development and the well-being of all Mozambicans. The eradication of poverty requires new dynamism and vigour, as clearly pointed out in the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries and the Millennium Development Goals. In that context, our five-year programme focuses on integrated rural development and the expansion of basic economic and social infrastructure, with the aim of reducing absolute poverty through the promotion of rapid, comprehensive and sustained economic growth and job creation. In addressing social and economic development, the programme seeks mainly to reduce regional imbalances and to expand the supply of basic services such as health, education and access to electricity and safe drinking water. The programme also gives due attention to the fight against HIV/AIDS, malaria and other infectious diseases, as well as to the special needs of young people in terms of training, employment and housing.

Through the implementation of sound political and macroeconomic policies and strategies for development, we have registered economic growth rates that have averaged 7.5 per cent annually from 2000 to 2005. Poverty levels have declined significantly, from 69.5 per cent in 1997 to 54 per cent in 2003. That has been possible due to our focus on our nationally owned poverty eradication strategy. That strategy has not only mainstreamed the MDGs and adapted them to our own realities, it also embodies a clear pro-poor and people-centred development strategy.

The consolidation of peace, democracy and national unity continue to be high on our national

agenda, as we recognize that peace and stability are sine qua non for securing sustainable development in our country.

We continue to build self-confidence around Africa. The continent counts on NEPAD to raise the spirit of ownership of African leaders, and thus bring about significant changes in our development. The adherence to date of 28 countries to the African Peer Review Mechanism has bolstered the credibility of participating States, as it ensures that their policies and practices comply with agreed political, economic and corporate-governance values, codes and standards.

We are seeing good examples of conflict resolution in Africa. However, conflicts continue to cause unbearable human suffering, which deprives a large number of our fellow Africans of their inalienable right to live in dignity. We commend the efforts of the Secretary-General and the international community at large to address both humanitarian crises and the root causes of conflict in Africa.

With regard to Western Sahara, we urge the parties concerned to work together with the Secretary-General with a view to finding a political solution to the long-standing conflict in that country.

We are following with keen interest the latest developments in the Middle East. We continue to believe that a lasting solution to the question of Palestine — the core of the conflict in the region — must be in accordance with international law and relevant United Nations resolutions and must fully recognize the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination.

We welcome the decision to conclude a comprehensive convention on terrorism not later than June 2006, for that will constitute a further effort to strengthen the international community's resolve to face the challenge of eliminating the scourge of terrorism. Similarly, we would like to stress the importance of regional agreements and declarations to combat and eliminate terrorism in all its forms as a tool to strengthen cooperation among Member States and provide a platform for the effective implementation of international legal instruments to suppress terrorism.

We support the calls for a transparent verification mechanism that can help to prevent the use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear States. In that regard, we also share the view that all States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, without discrimination and while undertaking their responsibilities for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, should have the right to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, as well as to engage in research on nuclear technology in conformity with the provisions of the Treaty.

We would like to conclude by reaffirming the commitment of Mozambique to the principles and purposes enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, as well as our belief that the United Nations reform process will strengthen the Organization with a view to providing more and better assistance to all Member States, in particular with respect to addressing the special needs of Africa.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Choe Su Hon, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Mr. Choe Su Hon (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) (*spoke in Korean; English text furnished by the delegation*): On behalf of the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, please allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly. I should also like to congratulate your predecessor, Mr. Jean Ping, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Gabonese Republic, on his commendable work as President at the previous session. I look forward to the successful outcome of this session. My appreciation also goes to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his tireless efforts aimed at reforming the Organization to bring about multilateralism centred on the United Nations in conformity with the demands of the current changed situation.

Five years ago, when the Millennium Summit adopted its Declaration of peace, poverty eradication and respect for human rights, humankind sincerely hoped that, with the dawn of a new century, peace and prosperity would take hold around the world. However, despite the adoption of that Declaration and the aspirations of humankind, the world is today being drawn further into a vortex of instability and fear due to unilateralism and the highhandedness of the super-Power. On one side of the world, voices yearning for peace, poverty eradication and sustainable development continue to grow, while on the other side provocative acts such as armed invasion and the threat

of pre-emptive nuclear attack are being committed openly against sovereign States.

In North-East Asia alone, with the Korean peninsula at its centre, adventurous military attempts continue unabated, aggravating tension in the region, as does the strengthening of strategic military alliances, the large-scale introduction of highly sophisticated weapons and operational equipment, the establishment of missile defence systems and Ulchi Focus Lens-05 military exercises for pre-emptive strikes.

The current situation is becoming increasingly acute due to arbitrariness on the part of unilateralist forces. That urgently requires that Member States undertake a joint effort to bring about multilateralism centred on the United Nations on the basis of respect for the principles of sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity and mutual benefit.

As is well known, peace and stability on the Korean peninsula are directly linked to peace and security in the North-East Asian region and the rest of the world. As we have seen in recent years, the situation on the Korean peninsula is once again part of a vicious circle of tension and détente that is preventing the establishment of durable peace and stability. The primary cause for that lies in the national division forced upon us by foreign forces and the extremely hostile policy of the super-Power towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea's policy of Songun Jongchi — which is to say, to give priority to military affairs — is aimed primarily at coping with the attempts of the United States to suffocate the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which constitute a real threat. The Songun policy administered by the respected General Kim Jong Il is the basic safeguard for our sovereignty from the constant threat of the United States and for preventing another war on the Korean peninsula, thereby ensuring peace and security in North-East Asia.

This year, the north and the south of Korea together significantly commemorated the fifth anniversary of the announcement of the 15 June North-South Joint Declaration, as well as the sixtieth anniversary of Korea's liberation, thereby setting a new stage for the attainment of overall national unity and the realization of the cause of national reunification independently and peacefully under the theme "Our nation itself". The Government of our Republic will also make every possible effort in the future to bring about independent national reunification as soon as possible, achieve lasting peace and stability on the Korean peninsula and bring about the nation's common prosperity by thoroughly implementing the 15 June North-South Joint Declaration.

With a view to facilitating better understanding on the part of Member States and making positive contributions to the work of the current session, I would like to refer to the principled position and sincere efforts of our Republic regarding a fair solution of the nuclear issue between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States.

The Government of our Republic has consistently adhered to its position of addressing the nuclear issue peacefully, through dialogue and negotiations. As everyone knows, the nuclear issue is a direct product of the hostile policy of the United States against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea during more than half a century. Given that, driven by extreme hostility towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the United States has gone as far as designating our country as part of an "axis of evil" and making it a potential target for pre-emptive nuclear strikes, thereby militarily threatening our security, our country has been compelled to possess a self-defensive nuclear deterrent as a means of safeguarding our national dignity and sovereignty. In circumstances in which the United States, the sole world super-Power, is looking down on us and threatening to use nuclear weapons, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea — a country with a small territory and population — has no alternative but to possess a strong and legitimate means of self-defence.

As we have clarified time and again, the ultimate goal of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea with regard to the nuclear issue is the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. The denuclearization of the Korean peninsula was called for by President Kim Il Sung, the fatherly leader of our people. The 1992 North-South Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and the 1994 Agreed Framework between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States are manifestations of the invariable political will of the Government of the Republic to denuclearize the Korean peninsula by all means.

During the recent fourth round of six-party talks in Beijing, we approached discussions seriously and with magnanimity and a principled, fair and above-board position to achieve our consistent final goal of the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula at any cost, thereby enabling the talks to come up with an agreement on the principles to that end as part of a broad framework to overcome all challenges. The joint statement issued at that meeting reflects our principled position on the resolution of the nuclear issue. At the same time, it also clearly specifies the obligations of the United States and South Korea as the parties responsible for the denuclearization of the entire Korean peninsula.

As we have clarified more than once, there will be no need for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to keep a single nuclear weapon if relations are normalized between our country and the United States, bilateral confidence is built and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is not exposed to the United States nuclear threat any longer. What is most essential at this stage is for the United States to provide light-water reactors to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea as soon as possible as evidence of the former's substantial recognition of the latter's right to peaceful nuclear activities.

We shall watch closely how the United States acts in reality during the "action for action" phase. Our country's Government will continue to be patient and to do its best to bring about the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

If the United Nations is to fulfil its mission to ensure international peace and security and economic and social development, it should be reformed in conformity with the demands of the new century. That is the unanimous view of the international community.

In that regard, it is important that we take a multilateral approach centred on the United Nations and in line with the purposes and principles of the Charter. To that end, efforts should be made to, inter alia, prevent unilateralism and high-handedness leading to violations of the Charter and of international law, and to ensure that the functions and role of the United Nations in addressing major international issues remain pivotal.

Disputes should be resolved peacefully, through dialogue and negotiation. The unilateral use of force can never be justified in any case. Such actions as authorizing specific countries to launch pre-emptive attacks on the pretext of preventing conflicts should not be viewed as strengthening the collective security system of the United Nations and should therefore be rejected, as they are dangerous attempts to ignore both the principles of non-interference in others' internal affairs, as well as respect for sovereignty, as stipulated in the Charter.

Secondly, all important international issues should be addressed fairly and reasonably, in the interests of the overwhelming majority of Member States. We should not allow them to be dominated or dealt with by the super-Power or by a few powerful countries. In this context, we have been consistent in our insistence on the establishment of a system that mandates the General Assembly to review and endorse Security Council resolutions relating to sanctions and the use of force that can affect international peace and security.

The Security Council should be reformed on the basis of the principle of ensuring the full representation of the non-aligned and developing countries, which make up the overwhelming majority of Member States. We should never tolerate the permanent membership of Japan, which refuses to liquidate its past crimes against other countries, distorting its history of aggression and driving the regional situation towards confrontation.

The reform of the United Nations human rights machinery should take place in accordance with the demands of the majority of countries. In reforming the human rights machinery, the Organization should consider its most pressing task and ultimate goal to be putting an end to infringement on national sovereignty, the politicization of human rights and the application of double standards and selectivity, which are the most serious human rights violations at present. Like the reform of the Security Council, that reform effort should be carried out on the basis of the principle of ensuring the full representation of the non-aligned and developing countries that make up the overwhelming majority of the United Nations membership.

If that principle is ignored, the reform of the human rights machinery will remain just empty talk. Worse still, if the establishment of the Human Rights Council is aimed at legitimizing the high-handedness of a few countries on the pretext of human rights protection, the discussion itself will be completely meaningless.

The Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will continue to make an active contribution to the efforts of Member States to build a new, peaceful and prosperous world by further strengthening its friendly and cooperative relations with all countries that respect our national sovereignty in accordance with the ideal of independence, peace and friendship.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Nasser Al-Kidwa, chairman of the observer delegation of Palestine.

Mr. Al-Kidwa (Palestine) (*spoke in Arabic*): Unlike the Israeli Prime Minister, who a few days ago told the Assembly that he had come to the United Nations from Jerusalem, I — a native son of the land — was not able to come here from Jerusalem, because East Jerusalem, the capital of Palestine, still remains under Israeli occupation, despite the numerous United Nations resolutions in that regard. The abnormal situation of the city, which is sacred to the three monotheistic religions, is a clear indicator that we in the Middle East are, regrettably, still far from peace. Only when East Jerusalem is returned to its people, when United Nations resolutions are completely complied with and implemented and when the leaders of both countries are able to come freely from Jerusalem, will we have truly achieved the peace that we have so long awaited.

We are now at an important juncture that could constitute the beginning of the road to peace. Israel, the occupying Power, has completed its disengagement from the Gaza Strip with its withdrawal of the settlers, its dismantlement of the settlements there and the departure of the Israeli forces from that territory. In the northern West Bank, some settlers were also withdrawn, and four settlements were dismantled.

The end of the colonial settlement of one part of our land — regardless of how small it may be — is an important development, as is the withdrawal of the occupying forces from within that part. It is an important development that resulted from the steadfastness of our people and the growing realization, locally and internationally, of the impossibility of the continuation of the status quo. We recognize that the disengagement required political boldness. But, more important than the disengagement itself, are the way in which it occurred and the context, as well as the steps that will follow. That will determine whether the disengagement will take us further towards a comprehensive settlement and peace, or whether it is actually a step imposed by the realities on the ground and intended to facilitate the continuation of the occupation, the colonization of the West Bank and the obstruction of a final settlement.

For our part, we dealt positively with those matters and exerted strenuous efforts to prepare ourselves for assuming our responsibilities, to coordinate the steps to be taken with the Israeli side and to ensure a peaceful and safe atmosphere during the implementation phase. Indeed, we achieved reasonable results in that respect. Despite that fact, however, the basic nature of the plan remains: it was unilateral and did not take into consideration Palestinian interests and positions.

Israel, the occupying Power, has left the Gaza Strip completely devastated. Over the years, Israel destroyed Gaza's infrastructure, economic capabilities and social fabric, as well as the Palestinian Authority's security apparatus. Even the areas that had been under the control of its settlements were almost totally destroyed by Israel when it withdrew and left behind piles of rubble, which in itself constitutes a serious problem economically, environmentally and psychologically. Another problem was that Israel left behind, and did not dismantle, what it called houses of worship — which were not supposed to be there to begin with — in total disregard of its legal obligation to return the land to its original condition prior to the occupation.

Furthermore, since the disengagement, the Gaza Strip has remained under the control of Israel, which effectively continues to control the airspace, the territorial waters and the borders, thus continuing its control of the movement of persons and goods into and out of Gaza. For that reason, and in the light of the principle of the unity and territorial integrity of the occupied Palestinian territory, the Israeli occupation of the Gaza Strip has not ended and the legal status of Gaza has not changed: it remains part of the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem.

Overall, Israel's occupation and colonization of the Gaza Strip constitutes one of the worst injustices in recent history. In addition, it must be clear that the Gaza Strip — which comprises only 6 per cent of the area of the occupied Palestinian territory and which is

the most densely populated area in the world — cannot attain economic or political sustainability in isolation from the West Bank; without a permanent link to the West Bank, without freedom of movement and without tangible political progress and similar steps taken there.

What Israel is doing in the West Bank, particularly in East Jerusalem, is cause for us to be even more pessimistic. Israel has continued its construction of the wall in disregard of the unprecedented 9 July 2004 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice and resolution ES-10/15 of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly in that regard. As everyone can see, Israel has persisted in committing this grave crime, continuing to seize Palestinian land and attempting to annex it de facto, thereby destroying the livelihoods of tens of thousands of Palestinians, isolating them and imposing on them a totally different way of life and an unacceptable political situation.

Israel, the occupying Power, has also continued to establish and expand settlements. It has even devised the so-called E-1 plan to seize the whole of East Jerusalem and connect it to the Maale Adumim settlement, thereby severing the West Bank into two separate parts. All of the foregoing not only is unlawful and inhuman, but will also destroy any hope for a settlement and peace based on the two-State solution.

The central mission for the international community now, if we wish to safeguard the future of the Middle East and maintain the prospects for peace, is to bring about a real and complete cessation of all settlement activities and of the construction of the wall and to enforce the rule of law, the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice and relevant United Nations resolutions. That must be our central mission, and whether there is political progress or not, we must accomplish it.

But then, how are we to deal with the situation and move forward? First, we need to find rapid solutions for the outstanding issues regarding the Gaza Strip, including the Rafah crossing, the airport, the seaport, the removal of rubble from the Gaza Strip, and linking Gaza to the West Bank. If we resolve those issues we may be able to change the living conditions of the Palestinians there.

Secondly, the Sharm el-Sheikh understandings should be implemented, particularly the Israeli withdrawal from cities to pre-September 2000 positions and the release of prisoners and detainees. This could bring about a new reality and begin the process of rebuilding confidence between the two sides.

Thirdly, and in parallel with the aforementioned, it is necessary to return to negotiations and begin urgently the implementation of the road map, which lies at the heart of making political progress and is the path to a resolution of the conflict. For our part, we are ready to do this, and to begin final status negotiations immediately, as called for by President Abbas in his speech a few days ago. We hope that the Quartet will use its influence to make that happen, and we also hope that the international community as a whole, represented by the United Nations, will provide the needed support in that regard.

Here we must stress the importance of the international assistance being extended to the Palestinian people and the Palestinian Authority. We would like to express our gratitude to all donor countries for their important and considerable contributions. In that regard, I would like to express our appreciation as well for the role being played by Mr. Wolfensohn and his team, in particular for rapidly putting together an assistance programme for the Gaza Strip and for promoting economic development in the entire occupied Palestinian territory. In that regard, the importance of the Group of Eight (G-8) initiative must be emphasized, and we express our hope that all donor countries will support it.

We look forward to enjoying a dignified life like all other peoples of the world; we look forward to exercising our right to self-determination and national independence; we look forward to building our institutions and to enjoying a democratic way of life and democratic governance; we look forward to a peace based on two States, Palestine and Israel, in conformity with the 1949 Armistice Line; and we look forward to a just, agreed solution for the Palestine refugees in accordance with resolution 194 (III).

We have worked seriously to put an end to the cycle of military attacks and counter-attacks. We undertook a national dialogue that led to a unilateral declaration of ceasefire, and that ceasefire has been respected despite Israel's obstructions and provocations. That effort has led to an improvement in the general atmosphere; it is incumbent upon both

parties to strengthen it. For our part, we will continue our national dialogue with a view to establishing a permanent and mutual ceasefire in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, while reaffirming the right in principle of the Palestinian people to resist occupation and to self-defence. We must also reach a commitment by all Palestinian groups for a complete cessation of the targeting of civilians in Israel, which we have repeatedly condemned and which we view as harmful to our national interest.

Moreover, we will continue to exert efforts to impose law and order and to enhance our political system on the basis of real democracy, encompassing political pluralism and elections at all levels, including municipal and legislative elections. Israel must stop its attempts to interfere in and sabotage those elections. We will also continue to advance the development of our national institutions in various fields and will continue to try to rebuild the Palestinian economy and to improve living conditions. We must do that comprehensively throughout the occupied Palestinian territory, including, of course, in the Gaza Strip, which has suffered the most extensive destruction. We shall exert our utmost efforts to achieve those goals, even though we realize that they are really the tasks of post-conflict reconstruction and that no other people has realized such goals while still under occupation.

Our achievements will inevitably be limited, since Israel, the occupying Power, still controls most aspects of everyday life in the territories. Any progress in that regard will remain directly and organically linked to the achievement of real progress in the resolution of the conflict and the achievement of a comprehensive settlement between the two parties.

It seems that Israel and some of its friends now feel that they have succeeded in imposing many illegal conditions on the ground and in creating a degree of vagueness regarding some aspects of the conflict. In that way, they feel that they have an opportunity to undermine the legal foundations of the question of Palestine, to undermine international legitimacy and to erode the neutrality of the United Nations. We, in contrast, believe that situations created illegally will not stand. We affirm that the facts are clear and indisputable, that justice and the rule of law will eventually prevail over force and that the United Nations — the embodiment of the international community — will not forsake its responsibilities and will not relent in the face of continuous violations of its resolutions.

We hope that the Israeli authorities will begin to seriously rethink their policies and positions instead of trying to market them in the United Nations and in other international forums. We hope that they will declare their respect for United Nations resolutions and their readiness to implement them, rather than blaming the United Nations for adopting those resolutions. That will be the start of the solution and the start of a final peaceful and permanent settlement, which must be based on law, international legitimacy and United Nations resolutions.

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.